Interview with Walter J. Silva

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

WALTER J. SILVA

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: I wonder if we could start out by asking you a bit about when and where you were born, your family, early upbringing. Could we start there?

SILVA: I was born in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1925. It was a small town then. When I graduated from Plymouth High School it was in a class of about a hundred. The town has grown a lot since then— turning old route three into a super highway brought Plymouth within commuting distance of Boston.

Q: What was your father, what about your parents...

SILVA: My parents came from the Azores. A good many Azoreans came to Plymouth, but most went to New Bedford, Nantucket, Fall River, southern California. There was a strong link between the whaling towns of old New England and the Azores. In the mid-Eighteenth century, and for the next sixty years or so, the whalers left their New England ports and stopped at the Azores to pick up dorymen and harpooner. My great grandfather, for example, was a thirteen-year old, playing on the beach at San Lorenzo and was whisked off by a whaler to serve as a cabin boy. When the ship returned to New Bedford more than two years later he was set ashore and paid off ($200, the story goes). The Civil War had started and the blockade kept him from going home to his family. A couple of

years later, he married in New Bedford and settled down as a ship's chandler. When his wife died he went back to the Azores and remarried and started a family. He bought a schooner that fished the cod off the Grand Banks. He drowned there in a squall. His son was killed in the First World War, leaving a widow, two sons and a daughter. My father was then about 10 years old and had been apprenticed to a cabinetmaker. His sister, my Aunt Mary, was already 18 years old and married a man who had settled in Plymouth. A couple of years after she had been left a widow, my grandmother came to the US with her two sons and moved in with her daughter. By then, at twelve or so, my father was a pretty able cabinetmaker. He went to school in Plymouth for a couple of years and at age fourteen went to work for a local builder. At sixteen he was hired by the Plymouth Cordage Company, then said to be the world's biggest rope maker. During World War II, for example, the factory made all the nylon cord for the army's parachutes, and it produced all the huge ropes, “hawsers”, that were used by capital ships, military and civilian (the Queen Mary's for example) to tie up at docks. Though he worked in a rope factory, he dealt with wood. He created the wooden dies that twisted the fibers into the large diameter rope, that was his job, for years. Eventually he was put in charge of the “rope walk,” the nearly mile long building where the hawsers were put together. (Part of that rope walk has been moved to the Mystic Seaport in Mystic, Connecticut.) He retired at 60, when the mill was closed. If I remember correctly, the company, which had been founded in 1830 or so, was sold to a fellow who also owned the Columbia rope company in Montreal and had also bought another rope company in New Orleans. It seems to me he was the same fellow who gave the notorious Vicuna coat to Sherman Adams. At any rate it seems he bought the Plymouth Cordage Company in order to close it, and it was said, to loot the retirement fund. So that when my father retired by force at age 60 he also did it without a retirement fund. But he did well enough, I guess, he educated 6 children and he survived until he was 88. He died of a minor heart attack on Christmas Eve. My mother is still alive, she is 92 and is in a nursing home where she has been for four or five years. She is paralyzed, can't speak, cannot be cared for at home. But luckily she is in Plymouth, where I have a brother and sister who look in on her every day.

Q: So you went to Plymouth High, and then what happened?

SILVA: Well then I applied to college. I was accepted at Harvard the year I graduated from high school, 1943. I started in my freshman year and in the first term, it must have been October, with things heating up in the war, I decided to take the examination for the naval program, V-12 it was called. It was special training to take college kids, give them a little education and make them into pilots. I passed the examination, but I flunked the physical. My eyes weren't good enough. In those days you had to see well to fly an airplane, which apparently is no longer the case. At any rate, I flunked the physical and found suddenly that I had automatically entered the reserve in the Army specialized training program, I hadn't banked on that, but that was the way it worked. The program was sold as a way to get an education at government expense, with military service at the end of it. No one was studying very hard anyway then. The war was a major distraction, to say the least. We were issued funny looking uniforms with blue lapels and a little close order drill was added to our freshman curriculum. It was all a bit silly but fairly comfortable. During the Christmas holiday a good part of the freshman class, all of us in the blue lapels, was called to active duty. The first week in January we found ourselves taking basic training at Fort Benning. We were assured that (presumably owing to our superior intellects) we would be going back to school when the training ended. About halfway through basic training it was announced that the program was disbanded and we were all urged to select that branch of the service that would please us most. And of course everyone opted for the MPs or something in the engineers, intelligence or logistics... and we all went to the infantry. I volunteered for the airborne, which kept me in Fort Benning, I went through all the basic airborne training and on the first jump I dislocated my knee. So I spent a few days in the hospital and a long time in a kind of cast, and I did not finish the training. I expected to be shipped off to God knows where and made into something less than relevant to the War. But instead they sent me to Fort Jackson, and there I did two courses in useful military things, explosives and communications...I can still strip a mean wire, but can no longer blow anything up. In the spring of 1944, along with some 18,000 others I took the all-

expense-cruise to England aboard a ship that was called the “West Point”, which in fact was the barely finished “United States.” I slept in the first class swimming pool, which had been covered over and furnished with tiers of bunks. My end of the pool naturally was the deep end and I was on the top bunk, a long climb up and a long drop if I were to lose my grip.

Q: I've swum in that pool!

SILVA: I ended up in Litchfield, they put me in a replacement depot and eventually we landed in Europe.

Q: I think it's interesting to get the military history of people dealing in foreign affairs, because for the historian it gives an idea of where these people came from. What was your Division?

SILVA: Briefly, the 29th and the 87th.

Q: That was Pennsylvania?

SILVA: Yes, the “bucket of blood,” it was called. I was hit on the second day, superficial but messy looking. So I went back to England for what was only a couple of days in the hospital. Two weeks later I was back, and I joined a thing called the 345th Combat Team of the 87th. I missed a good deal of the Normandy Campaign, came back for the end of it and the assault on the old fortress of Metz, which had been part of the Maginot Line.

Q: You were with Patton then?

SILVA: Yes, the 345th was part of Patton's Third Army. Then from there we moved to Luxembourg, where we were when the German panzer assault came through the Ardennes, the “Battle of the Bulge”. We moved up to St. Vith, in the forest outside St. Vith, (not into the town of course—generally, the infantry, I found, seemed obsessed with discomfort—being cold and wet, hungry and dirty was considered a natural state)

where the privileged support units were billeted. We had a number of encounters with the other side, a lot of the people I knew were killed, and what I remember vividly was that it was beastly cold and we were not equipped for it. But we got through that and a couple of weeks later crossed the Moselle at Koblenz and from Koblenz across the Rhine to Osterspai (where I got hit again, again not bad—meaning I was treated at Battalion Aid and back on the line the next day). The Black Forest campaign was messy, through the Siegfried line of bunker after bunker. It was there that I saw the first black American combat troops. All I had seen before were in transport and supply units. These were a tank destroyer company that our battalion called up to help soften some of the bunkers before the infantry moved in. I heard the whole conversation in some shock. Our colonel explained to the black lieutenant that he wanted him to move up the tank destroyers (big guns they were) ahead of the infantry to blast the bunkers when they came in view. The Lieutenant replied that he would not “risk my boys to save your white asses.” And the infantry went ahead. It was an episode hard to forget as in later years we went through the civil rights movement and affirmative action. Near the end of the war we went on to the Czech border to a city called Plauen, a fairly large city, 150,000 people they said. We destroyed it. It was leveled in 20 minutes. It was both impressive and shocking. Everybody knew the war was coming to an end, and they were trying to avoid casualties as much as possible. So when we got to the outskirts of the town they brought up the trucks with loudspeaker equipment and told the people of Plauen that they ought to surrender peacefully. If there was any opposition, it was announced, the town would be destroyed. Of course there were shots so the lead company withdrew. The 15th Air Force (I think it was the 15th) was called in, made a couple of passes and leveled the town. It was quick and thorough but there were surprisingly few casualties among the inhabitants. When it was over the people came out of their shelters and started immediately to work over the rubble and clear the streets. It made me wonder about the efficacy of the bombing of population centers.

It turned out that Plauen was home to a slave labor camp. The compound was just outside of town. They grew potatoes and made alcohol for the V-2's. Most of the prisoners were Poles, some Ukrainians, Czechs, a scattering of other Central Europeans. And they were almost as badly treated as the Jews were at Buchenwald, (which the Third Army liberated, and I got to see as well). But they also treated these Poles very badly. There were mass graveyards. The staple of their diet was a thin soup made of potato peels. We found the emaciated and dying lying in filth in the barracks. My platoon was the first into the camp and we stood helplessly by while the Poles set up a court and tried the camp commandant. There were some 5000 inmates and about 30 of us, so there wasn't much we could do to stop it, if we had been so inclined, and not many of my men were. The prisoners went ahead, the judge (the only English speaker there) had been a professor of philosophy at Krakow, he said. The jury was a jury of the whole and the verdict was by acclamation. They found the commandant guilty and executed him. It was rough justice, it was democratic, but it was nonetheless brutal. They beat him to death with clubs. We were able to keep them from the few guards who had not run for it on our arrival, but the death of the commandant stayed with me for a long time.

I got my first leave on the 6th of May and was trucked to Paris where I tasted the fruits of liberation and took part in the wild celebration of VE-day. When I got back we did a few weeks of occupation duty (now living in pup tents) then the entire division moved to Camp Lucky Strike to prepare to go home. We were told that after a furlough we would move on to the Pacific for more fun and games. As my furlough came to an end the bomb was dropped and the Japanese surrendered. I went down to Camp Shelby in Mississippi for a discharge. Although I had more than enough “points” to get out I was made first sergeant of the casual company through which dischargees had to pass. There were times when the “company” had as many as fifteen hundred men in it. Finally, I got my discharge.

Over the previous year there were a couple of moments when my life could have been completely different (not counting the moments when it could have ended suddenly} .

I was offered a field commission when I was a platoon sergeant back in January or February of 1945. I turned it down. I preferred to stay with the men I had come to know well and who depended on me. A commission meant a transfer. Then when the war ended I was told I was eligible for an appointment to West Point. (It seems the division commander had that prerogative and because I had collected a few medals, I was on the list). By that time I had enough of the Army for a lifetime. I decided to go back to school in Cambridge and finish what I had started.

Q: What was the atmosphere at Harvard when you went back?

SILVA: I went back at the end of 1945 for the winter term. It was an interesting time there, very different. There were lots of people still in uniform. I had the sense that there was a kind of democratization in progress at that time. It was false, but it looked that way. There were people from all over the country mixed in with the prep school boys.

Q: It was the impact of the GI Bill.

SILVA: Yes. In the year immediately following the war they were trying to get back to normal in terms of the numbers of students, and they took in more people than they otherwise would. They also took more diverse people and they took more of them, expecting that there would be a greater number than normal who would fail. Of course that happened too. A lot of men just weren't able to adapt to a different set of pressures than they had become used to.

Q: What were you taking?

SILVA: In 1943 I started out in the Classics, I was going to be a Latin/Greek scholar. It sounds stupid now, it really does. But I had a high school English teacher who was a kind of a scholar and I admired her greatly and that's why... But anyway, when the war ended I went back and I became a Comparative Literature major. At that time it was called a “concentration.” And my minor was the Fine Arts.

Q: Did you have any, or were you at all interested in international affairs at that time?

SILVA: No. I don't think so. I think I was pretty much aware, I knew what the hell was going on in the world, I had an interest in it, but no real interest in participating in it. I think it was because at age 20 I felt I had had as much participation in international affairs as anybody should have to.

Q: So you weren't involved, say in the International Student Association...?

SILVA: Well, I was a member of the World Federalists, which later got me into trouble when it came to my first security clearance. I had to explain to this dummy from the FBI that this was not a Communist front organization. But at any rate I did that. I worked for the Phillips Brooks House, which was a charity organization at school. I taught art, so to speak, at a settlement house in North Cambridge. I was a member of the Art club and I did some cartooning for the Harvard Lampoon (but never became a member). Current affairs, no, just the world federalists. At the time I thought that was an intelligent way to solve our problems. That shows how ignorant I was.

Q: Well I think many of us, I was not a veteran at that time, the Korean War got me, but I started college in '46, and I mean, the United Nations was going to be a big thing and the world was going to be a better and happier place. Did you feel any of the beginning of the McCarthyism business or anything like that?

SILVA: Not personally, when he became a national figure I was working in New York and found Mr. McCarthy and his politics and his methods appalling. A couple of my classmates, including Roy Cohn, did not think so and turned up at his table during the senate hearings.

Q: You graduated, what, in '49?

SILVA: Yeah, '49.

Q: Then what did you do?

SILVA: I went to New York and I got a job as a trainee at an ad agency which no longer exists, Ruthrauf and Ryan, they have since merged with another agency or simply gone out of business. I made $27.50 a week, as a trainee. That didn't work out very well because my rent was $40 a week. So after perhaps six months, I guess, I went to work for Harper & Row as an editorial trainee. I think the stipend was something like $32.50, which was approaching my rent, but still not reaching it. That didn't last very long. I then went to work for a commercial investment trust on Park Avenue. A massive, frightening organization, with tentacles everywhere, Commercial Factors was one of the subsidiaries, Firemen's Insurance was another subsidiary, Universal CIT was another (the second largest automobile financing company after GMAC) and on and on. At one time when I was there they bought the outstanding paper of Triple M (Scotch tape, you know), so they were able to put two people on the Board. They owned the company in a backhanded way. It was huge. I hated it. I was a special assistant to the vice president for operations, and I did my duty. My roommates at the time were a classmate, Frank Schmelzer, and a Tufts graduate, Bob Walsh. We shared a minimal little place in Brooklyn Heights. Frank left to join the Foreign Service. I had never thought of the Foreign Service, frankly. He went off to India and wrote me a couple of times. That gave me the notion. So I wrote a letter to the Department of State to inquire about employment possibilities. I knew absolutely nothing about it. I got a telegram back from the Office of Personnel, from a lady named Roween Brooks who was later married to the fellow who was then Consul General in Bombay. In any event, Roween Brooks was head of part of the office of Personnel. The telegram offered me an appointment in the Foreign Service as an FSS-13 at $3,120 a year.

Q: Big money!

SILVA: That's exactly what I was making with the company in New York. It comes to $60 a week. The big difference was that overseas I wouldn't be paying rent!

Q: No more $40!

SILVA: It seemed logical. So I sent her a telegram accepting. I had no idea what the job was all about. I didn't have a clue. Then I got another telegram saying I should report to the Department, to the Office of Personnel, to a Mr. Marvin Will.

Q: Oh yes, the famous Marvin Will.

SILVA: Yes, he was head of Personnel. I was told to report to him at the Walker Johnson building. It used to be right behind what is now the extension of the Corcoran Art Gallery. I went to Washington, suitcase in hand and went directly to the Walker Johnson building where I was ushered up to Mr. Marvin Will's office. How many new people get introduced to the Director General these days? He was sort of the equivalent at the time. I, along with half a dozen others, was introduced to Marvin Will. He was what sold me on the Foreign Service. I had looked forward to a little two or three year adventure, but Marvin Will made the Department look like the kind of place one would want to work. He had this marvelous, avuncular manner, “How are you boys, do you have a place to live? No?” He got out his little card file and called rooming houses on Columbia Road, and we were all placed in two boarding houses. This was the head of personnel! He answered all our personal questions and then finally asked, “How are you fixed for money? You're not going to get paid for a couple of weeks.” Nobody had any money. So he said “Let's go downstairs, the Credit Union is in the basement.” And we went downstairs and we all applied for loans in the amount of two weeks pay and Marvin Will co-signed all the loans. Incredible. Absolutely incredible.

I worked there in the Walker Johnson building for a couple of weeks. I was a general clerk and I and a fellow named Bill Wagley (he was USIS, but in those days we were all one big happy family) went to the basement of the Walker Johnson building where the files were kept, where we were supposed to straighten out the 3x5 cards that were part of the Personnel records. But I think the entire files of Personnel filled about six cabinets.

And then they had eight little drawers of 3x5 cards that summarized all the files. The day we went down there we were supposed to check and see that everything was in order, literally and figuratively, and Bill Wagley knocked one of these boxes off onto the floor. So we had four full drawers of 3x5 cards all mixed up, and that's what we did for two weeks, straightened out those cards.

I got my assignment, to Dakar, French West Africa, the American Consulate General for French West Africa.

Q: You were there from 1952-54?

SILVA: Yes. It was a small Consulate General, on the second floor of an office building downtown. In my last visit to Dakar I couldn't find the building, the town had changed so much. The housing for the Consulate General was next door to and separated by a wall from the Governor's Palace. The Consulate General had a half a dozen funny little houses, no air conditioning. No windows just double louvered doors on each side. The Consul General's house had windows. It was a nice two-story building overlooking the sea, but the staff lived across the street in these little colonial houses of two or three rooms. If you wanted to go to another room you had to go outside and go in through another door. But I thought they were great. It was part of the adventure. I enjoyed it, it was a fascinating city. During the time I was there the Department asked posts of some antiquity to return any old records that might still be at the post. I was a General Services clerk, and I went through the basement of the CG's residence and through the garages we were using as warehouses, and I found the old leather bound registries. In these old records dating back to the last century we had documents entered by hand which were copies of messages that had been sent by sea to Washington. They all began “My Dear Sir, I have the honor to report that...” and at the end it was “Your obedient servant.” They were the old original dispatches, I guess. We sent those back.

There was an exciting moment in 1953, Pan Am crashed an airplane in the western part of Liberia. It was the rainy season, the middle of the rainy season in Liberia and it was just beginning up in the North in Senegal. So the Consul General volunteered that we would make an effort to reach the crash site from the north (never having traveled outside the city I don't think he quite grasped what distance and difficulties were involved. For some reason the nearest American entity, the Firestone company, hadn't been able to reach the site. The CG asked me to try to make it. He asked me to try it because I had a car that might make it. I owned a jeep, an old military style 1947 model. It ran pretty well. Nobody else at post owned a private car except the CG. He had this beautiful old Jaguar pre-war saloon and he wasn't going to risk that for anything. The official car were a Chevrolets a sedan and a station wagon. The only car available that could make the attempt was mine, so he volunteered me to go, me and a French national employee working for me in General Services. We got less than halfway and had to turn back. Actually, we got as far as the Gambia River. There we had a sort of bright moment. There was no bridge where the track met the river, only a post with a bell on it and a pulley with a line that dipped into the water and came out the other side. There was a ferry. We rang the bell and soon an African in white shirt and shorts came down the hill and cranked the ferry over to us. We drove on to what was essentially a simple raft and got to the other side. We followed our ferryman up the hill on a track lined with whitewashed rocks. There behind a heavy growth of plants shaded by a flame tree was a rather large house that had seen better days. The ferryman asked us to sit on the veranda and disappeared into the house. It was mid-afternoon, very quiet. Then our friend returned, having added a red fez to his costume, and offered us a cold drink. He explained that “He” was still having his afternoon nap but would soon join us. “He,” it turned out, was some sort of British official responsible for Upper Gambia. And he eventually appeared, trim, tall and young. Welcoming us, he asked “You will have tea, won't you?” He acted as though he had visitors every day. We were a little dirty, but we sat down on the veranda and had tea. It was all very proper. He had his white shirt, white jacket, white pants, black tie. Immaculate. And then he asked us if we would like to spend the night, again in an offhand manner as if this happened every day

of the week. Actually I don't think the man had a visitor more often than every two or three months! But anyway, we said sure, we'd be delighted to. We gratefully accepted his offer of the shower facility out back under a fifty gallon drum of water. And talking to himself he said something like, “I don't suppose, no,” then asked: “You don't mind do you, but I do dress for dinner?” He came out in black tie, the works. We had dinner, it was edible. He said, “In the morning, now, I like to have my breakfast a little late. The boy will bring you your tea, and then when you come down you tell him what you want.” Late? I thought he meant 9:00 or 10:00 o' clock in the morning. He was up at 6:00! We were wakened for tea at the same time. After we dressed we went out to the verandah to join him for breakfast. His house boy brought him the London Times. “You don't mind if I read the Times do you?” “No.” So he read the Times over breakfast. I had noticed a stack of newspapers in his bookcase in the living room. Then I saw the day on the paper in his hands. I realized that it was about four months old and he was reading from the stack in sequence. He was that much behind the rest of the world and had chosen not to disturb the rhythm of his isolated existence! It seemed incredibly disciplined to me..and perhaps a clue as to how the British Empire had lasted as long as it did. Anyway, we left there, headed southeast a little further, until the road became completely impassable. We turned around and went back.

Q: Who was the CG?

SILVA: Monroe Williams Blake. He went from there, I think, to Liverpool or Birmingham as CG and died soon after he got there. He was a very heavy drinker. It was a common problem then, especially in Africa. One of the two Consuls there hardly ever drew a sober breath.

Q: Did you get any feel for the politics of Dakar?

SILVA: In one way, yes. Dakar was the home of APT, the African Petroleum Terminal so tankers would come in with astounding frequency usually from Aruba. Caltex, Texaco,

Esso all shared the terminal. The government was then French, led by a French Governor General whose name was marvelous, Bernard Cornut Gentil, the happy cuckold!. And he was, as a matter of fact. I don't know if he was happy, but he was certainly a cuckold. He was the Governor General, the Africans had a Parliament, I never understood what its function was except airing grievances perhaps, because the rules were made in France. They elected a representative to the French Parliament even then, part of what the French would have called an enlightened colonial policy. But nonetheless the Senegalese government was a rubber stamp Parliament.

The visits of the tankers created some difficulties because the company would not let the crew ashore and would shuttle between Aruba and back to Dakar for about six months or a year without being able to leave the ships. Any leave came at the end of those long periods. They did not represent the best class of seaman, the higher types would not have accepted those conditions. They were what they were. During one visit one guy did manage to get to shore, swam I suppose, wandered around town, and somehow found the government building and went in in the middle of a session of the Parliament and started screaming about “All you niggers.” That upset the hell out of everybody, including those who didn't understand what he was saying. And there were enough people around who knew some English to understand the portent of his offense. He was arrested and taken away. He was eventually returned to his ship.

I think the consular, diplomatic establishment was pretty much divorced from what was really going on in the country. We saw it much the way a tourist does, fascinating, very colorful etc. But the French jealously guarded their colonial prerogatives and would not permit other countries to intervene, especially culturally—the teaching of English was frowned upon for example. I think that the incident of the sailor in the parliament was discussed in consular circles. We were reminded, number one, that there was an African Parliament and that they thought they were serious, no matter what we thought, and then this guy came out of nowhere to remind us of all the prejudices that existed and the problems that they create. Because it did create immediate problems. There were

demarches, indignant editorials in the local French press...and of course we had to get him out of jail and back on his ship. On another occasion a crew member stabbed and killed the captain who was then on the john. When he tried to escape the Police Chief (a Frenchman) shot him down.

Normally, except for routine consular activities, the occasional welfare case, it was not a busy post. The economic officer, Robert Sheehan, who is now dead, was an FSO-5 at the time. He got nearly all his information (economic and political) from a monthly visit to a major French trading company (CFAO if I remember correctly). If he met a member of one of the French banks at a national day reception he might produce another message. I don't think he ever talked to any blacks, any Senegalese, that I know of the whole time he was there. He got it all second hand from the ruling power. I think that's pretty much the way it was throughout colonial Africa in those days. There were some fascinating people there. I remember my houseboy, Samba, a Gambian, quick and bright, who had me pay him by check which he promptly deposited in a Bank in Bathurst. He was saving to go to the University in England. I understand he succeeded in becoming a barrister. And I remember Wilfart..never knew his first name—he never used it. A Jew, he had been a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp. He managed to escape and walked across europe, through Spain, over into Morocco and finally ended up in Senegal. Worked as a truck driver until he saved enough money to buy his own truck. He said that he drove into the bush as far as a tank of gas would take him and settled down. I met him when I went hunting near the farm he had established, and saw him fairly often afterward. He was well educated, a happy, witty, erudite man who had previously never worked with his hands. But in five years he had created a farm on what had been the barren banks of the river, and become quite prosperous.My career in West Africa came to an abrupt end around the end of '53, when the Wriston thing started...

Q: You might explain what the Wriston Program was.

SILVA: The Wriston program was supposed to lead to the integration of the two major personnel elements of the Department of State, the Foreign Service and the civil service, and the elimination of what was seen as the undemocratic split within the Foreign Service itself between Officers and Staff, “diplomats” and “non-diplomats.” Then only Foreign Service Officers were issued Diplomatic Passports and thereby enjoyed benefits, like free entry privileges, that were denied to the staff. The promotion ladder for Foreign Service Officers went a good deal higher than it did for staff people. The program was intended to end much of that disparity. Also under the Wriston program, Civil servants had a choice, if they were in positions designated for integration. They were not required to integrate, but I think most of them wanted to because they had a sort of romantic notion of what the Foreign Service was like. The Wriston program's lofty but questionable goals were never achieved and it became only one of the periodic reorganizations of the Foreign Service, its distinction was that it was the first major step in the continuing decline of the quality of the Foreign Service. As it happens, we still have a staff corps and the department is still divided between Foreign Service and Civil Service personnel. But anyway the idea was to bring them all together, and reduce the size of the Department of State. Well, in order to reduce it you had to somehow get rid of people, and the Wriston program provided for a reduction in force, a RIF. You could not RIF a Foreign Service officer because he was appointed by the President of the United States, you could RIF civil servants, but then they would bounce down in grade. You could easily RIF members of the Foreign Service staff corps, of which I was one. I was then an 11, I think. I had been rapidly promoted from 13 to 11 and was making $1,000 more, two grades up.

At any rate, I got my RIF notice, as did the budget and fiscal person. She had come in about the same time I did. They paid us off, gave us a “no later than” date, paid back our retirement contributions, paid us for unused annual leave and our last salary payment. We were told not to return to Washington. That was it. I got a check for $3,200, which seemed a lot of money at the time. I took the “Julio Cesare” from Dakar to Genoa, a marvelous trip, and in Genoa I bought an MG, paid $1,200 bucks for it and drove around

Europe for a while. I sold the car and came home, and when I got to Plymouth, there was a telegram waiting for me from the Department of State. It was an offer of employment! So then I discovered that I had been replaced in Dakar with a fellow from Malaysia who was married and had about five kids. They took this guy out of Malaysia, paid his travel and moved all his household goods to Dakar to replace me, and then two months later they wanted to hire me back. It didn't make any sense at all. So I called the Department, I think Roween Brooks was still there, and I talked to her and she wanted me to go to Panama. I said, “Well, I tried this Foreign Service business and I like parts of it, but I'm not going to go back as a damn clerk, I'm going to take the exam.” She said “Fine, but in the meantime take an appointment.” So I agreed and asked when the next exam would be. It was nearly a year away. I went to Panama, where I worked in the regional office of the Courier Service for a fellow named John Powell, who is still around. I haven't seen him in months. Johnny Powell was one of the princes of the Foreign Service. General Services officer, never more, but a great guy. Anyway, he was the head of the office at the time they had a scandal of sorts. A couple of couriers were dismissed, one went to jail, for smuggling watches or something, from Buenos Aires. In Chile they used to buy wine and in Buenos Aires they bought Romano cheese, and then some of them also smuggled the innards of Swiss watches. The last stop before Panama was Miami where the watch market supposedly was. So we all enjoyed the wine and the cheese and didn't know about the watches, but I guess the FBI caught on to them. Anyway, that was the only excitement in that office.

I was married there. My wife had just arrived, I knew her about three or four months. She was a secretary at the Embassy. We were married in the Canal Zone. We were both living at the Tivoli in the Canal Zone on Cuatro de Julio street, which is the boundary between the Zone and Panama City. It was built in 1903 for the visit of Teddy Roosevelt and had not changed. The plumbing had been somewhat improved, but that's all. It was rickety and infested with vermin, but it was a charming place, a string trio played for dinner every evening. One of the guests was Mrs. Marsh. the widow of a Canal worker,

who had lived in the Tivoli since Teddy's visit. That's where Mary and I both lived for a while, and then I got an apartment. After we were married I was informed that I was being transferred to Venezuela. I complained that it might interfere with my taking the Exam only to be told that the exam was not being given overseas that year, that I could try getting it next time in Venezuela. So I went off to Maracaibo, with the understanding that since I was intent on taking the exam anyway, I would be given an appointment as a staff vice consul, which was then rather common, nowadays very uncommon. I've still got the document, signed by John Foster Dulles. I was the vice consul there, no training, issued visas and passports, looked after dead Americans, the rare tourist, did everything. It was a three-man consulate, a Consul, me and Mary, and, oh yes, two CIA types. Mary was the secretary, code clerk, file clerk, she was the entire staff except for the Venezuelans. There were, again, one or two bits of excitement in my two and a half years at the post, murders...

Q: How did you deal with these things, say on a murder, with the Venezuelan government?

SILVA: It was very difficult to deal with the Venezuelan government on anything at the time. This was the period of the dictator Perez Jimenez, Maracaibo was the capital of the state of Zulia and it was run by the military. The governor of the state was a real despot. Once the Consul was going to drive to Caracas, which was an adventurous kind of undertaking, and went though one of the roadblocks outside of town. He didn't stop because there seemed to be no one around. But a soldier stepped from behind a tree and fired a shot through the rear window of the car. He must have been able to see the consular license plate and the American flag on the fender but that may have been a further incentive. It was that kind of a place. The police once informed me that they had in custody (now unfortunately dead) an American tool pusher for one of the oil companies, Creole (which was Standard Oil of Venezuela). His body was in the morgue. According to the police he had been beaten up and robbed in a bar. He was taken to jail and he died in jail. I was called down to the morgue, which was a very primitive place,

with the sickening smell of death, to identify the man because he looked like he might be a gringo. (Finally, checking the three locally established oil companies for missing persons and checking the photos in our passport files we were able to identify him. The body was in terrible shape, bruises scrapes and cuts all over. One of the other prisoners in the jail, who was a little flaky, said he had seen the American beaten to death in the cell by the police. They were trying to find out where he hid his money or something. Our complaints went absolutely nowhere. The police would never admit it. I tried to get the Embassy in Caracas to begin with a loud protest and work up from there to working over the Venezuelan Ambassador in Washington. But our Ambassador in Caracas would do nothing though the Embassy agreed it probably was a case of murder by the Venezuelan authorities. The dead American had no relatives in the U.S. to make a fuss on his behalf, his employer was more interested in the untroubled exploitation of its oil concessions and his own government did not want to take on another of the two bit dictatorships we were in bed with. It turned out that this guy owned over a million dollars (this is 1954) in company stock. He had been buying stock in Standard Oil for 20 years. And he probably did have a lot of money on him when the police arrested him, but it was gone.

It was an interesting post. We had a lot of Italians on the visa waiting list because then persons from Latin America did not need immigration visas to come to the United States. It was looked upon at the time by Italians of a certain level of education, as being a stepping stone to the United States. There were no quotas for Latin Americans. So these Italians assumed that taking up residence in Venezuela conferred some sort of privileged status. As a result we had this enormous waiting list, tens of thousands of Italians had settled in Venezuela, and it seemed most of them were on my waiting list. Many would come in regularly to wheedle, beg, threaten...one once emptied a bag of gold coins on my desk and asked — “How much do you need?” It was sad but sometimes fun.

There in Maracaibo I took the exam, finally. And, I passed. The Department had announced that oral examinations would be given at selected Embassies abroad. I guessed Paris, London, and Rome if the examiners had a choice. But Caracas was

included. It turned out they couldn't do it that year, budgetary problems. So I asked whether I could wait and take orals the following year on home leave. I was told I'd have to take the written exam again the next year. So I said “Well, how do I do it this year?” “Well, you can always come to Washington.” So I paid my way from Venezuela to Washington, I passed the orals, and then I went back...

Q: How did you find the orals, by the way.

SILVA: Fascinating, just fascinating. It took a long time, a very distinguished group... Herbert Failes, he was the Department's premier economist at that time... Walter somebody who was Ambassador to the Netherlands, and a third ambassador, all three very distinguished members of the Service who continued distinguished careers afterwards. Unlike what we're doing today, which is dumping unassignables and failures on the Board of Examiners. At any rate the exam was fascinating. I was sure that I had flunked. I was surprised that I had passed, because Failes kept after me on economics —name the cities of the Hanseatic League. I told him I knew what the Hanse was, but I couldn't remember the cities. I said I didn't think it was important anyway because it no longer exists. Then he said, okay, then tell me about the Saint Lawrence seaway, which was then very much in the news. Name the American cities that will benefit most from the opening of the seaway. I said “Is it coming to the States?” He thought I had a certain flippant contempt for economics, which I did at the time, and he was very unhappy, but he was occasionally amused. Anyway, I went back to Maracaibo, a couple of months later we went to the States on home leave and I was informed that I was on the register and would be appointed sometime in the future. They were kind, but unable to be very specific about the appointment. I was to be transferred to Naples to work on the refugee program.

Q: Oh yes, I came in in '55 and went to Frankfurt for the program. That's where we all went.

SILVA: That's where I was going as a staff vice consul. So I enjoyed my home leave, getting ready to leave for Naples, and I got another telegram, the assignment is broken, you're going to Beirut. I went to Washington, much to their dismay—they wanted me to go directly to Beirut. I went to Washington and found out that the reason they had changed my assignment was that my name had moved up quickly on the register and I was about to get an appointment. So they couldn't send me to the job in Naples, because that was a staff job. The distinction at the time, even after Wriston, was very strong. Luckily my household effects had been left in Maracaibo and not been shipped, otherwise my belongings would have gone to Naples and ended up in the flea market. But as it was, the post had screwed up and hadn't shipped them. So our effects and we went to Beirut. I went there as the American Citizen's Affairs officer, and after I was there for two months I got appointed an FSO-8. I was then an FSS-9, which was the equivalent of an FSO-6. But at the time you got no credit for education, no credit for experience, and certainly no credit for knowing what was going on in the Service. The post was in the middle of an inspection. I was interviewed by one of the inspectors, a very attractive traditionalist. I told him I could integrate as an 0-6 or accept the regular appointment as an 0-8. He was opposed to my coming in via “the back door” as he put it, suggesting that integratees would never be fully accepted. I bought it. So I was appointed an 8 and kept the consular job for a little over a year as part of the rotation of new officers. Very exciting job.

Q: I have you in Beirut from 1957 to 1960.

SILVA: Right. In 1958 we had the evacuation. The Marines landed, on a beach crowded with astounded bikini clad Beirutis. That was exciting. Lots happened. I got to meet Kim Philby and that whole strange group out there.

Q: Kim Philby was technically head of intelligence in the area but he was really working for the KGB.

SILVA: He was the Third Man. He wasn't officially British Intelligence, because British Intelligence was the Consul General, the so-called Consul General of the Embassy whose name was Pierotti, an Irishman named Patrick Pierotti. Philby was there and given lots of deference by the British Embassy. Apparently they had an idea of what he was doing but theirs was a watching brief. He was sent there to put him on the periphery of affairs and keep him on ice. But I met him as part of the investigation that I tried to run into the murder of a prominent American citizen. This guy was a lawyer, a brilliant guy in his early '30s. He had a degree from Harvard Law and from Oxford. He had been hired by a major oil company right out Oxford and there he was in the Middle East representing the oil company. He was also gay, and he had become involved with the son of one of the company big-wigs and the big-wig didn't like that. I understand this fellow had run off with the son to what is now Yemen on a sort of romantic trip, and the young man, the son of the oil baron, had gotten into trouble with one of the local sheiks whose son was similarly inclined. So there was all sorts of talk of chopping their heads off, but they managed to escape. The case caused a furor in this little corner of the world, so that the oil baron decided to fire our lawyer friend. Our friend, the story went, left the company headquarters, which I guess then was in Riyadh, in Saudi Arabia, and took with him much of the company records, supposedly recording all kinds of nefarious doings in concessions, rights, bribery etc. He ended up in Beirut.

He was found dead in his apartment. The cleaning woman found him. The police came, and the police called the Consulate, the Protection and Welfare Officer (me) asking that I come to the murdered man's apartment. The body was gone but the apartment looked intact. No sign of any ruckus of any kind. According to one of his friends the victim had a very large and valuable collection of gold coins of some antiquity, some ancient Greek, Roman, Muslim pieces. A very valuable collection that apparently was kept in an unlocked desk drawer and had not been disturbed. The only thing that was missing was the files. Together with one of the Lebanese FSNs we started to take an inventory. I opened the drawers of two sets of file cabinets and all were empty. The police insisted they had taken

nothing out of the apartment. Their theory was that the victim had taken a taxi home that night and hopefully invited the driver in. Once in the apartment, the driver, the theory went, was not so inclined and killed our friend. Since nothing of value seemed to be missing, I made some inquiries. I called Pierotti to talk to him about it, because our friend had letters, notes, calendar notations of encounters with various people, one of them being Kim Philby. I knew nothing of Philby's bisexual proclivities at the time but I called Pierotti and he acknowledged that he had known our friend and run into him occasionally at receptions where he seemed to know Philby. The upshot was that it was very clear that there was something very fishy with the man's death and the apparently missing files, but you couldn't prove it. The police weren't any help because they had immediately and conveniently assumed it was a homosexual murder. They would not entertain the notion that there was something much deeper here than what they called “a hit.” It was frustrating but it was one of many episodes in Beirut that made it an exciting place to be.

It's funny, I haven't done consular work since but I recall that some of the most exciting moments in the Foreign Service come to consular officers...certainly the most fun.

Q: Oh absolutely, it's where you're really up against people.

SILVA: For example, we got the visit of Danny Thomas.

Q: He was a well-known comedian.

SILVA: Yes, I think he's dead now. But anyway, he was a very nice man, genuinely amusing and a genuinely good person. He came to the Consulate to register like any good American citizen should. He was on his way to visit his family in the Cedars, a town called Besharre, where his family came from, and he was going to stay a week, that was it. Off he went. And it may have been four days later when he came back. He had been met originally by members of his family who drove him up to the little town and he took a taxi back. And his luggage was gone. His family had virtually cleaned him out. His shoes, his jackets, his pants. They just assumed, you know, that he was part of the family and share

and share alike. He had become a success in the States, and the family had the right to share in it. Among other things they had convinced him to buy them a taxi so that they could go into business. His parting shot to the Embassy was “I'm never coming back.” Similarly we had the case of a Lebanese/American woman who disappeared and who we later found was being held captive by relatives who wanted her to give them money.

Then we had the evacuation. The Marines landed, and a number of exciting moments followed.

Q: This was a very important event in U.S. foreign relations, July 14, 1958, when the Marines landed in Lebanon under Eisenhower because of the overthrow of the King in Iraq and Nasser. Could you explain a bit about what you were seeing at the time, the situation?

SILVA: Well, what we saw happen in Lebanon was a reflection of what Egypt's Nasser had inspired in the area. In effect Syria intervened very directly in what appeared to be an internal civil altercation in Lebanon. Muslim Lebanese were determined to overthrow the system of confessional government that had been established during the French Mandate. The system was established on the premise that the majority of the population was Christian—based on a census which the Muslims asserted was not accurate.

The government was to reflect the population. The Prime Minister was a Maronite Christian, the Deputy Prime Minister would be a Greek orthodox or whatever, and each cabinet position was designated by religion. So the Muslims found the moment in 1958 to try to redress the balance, so to speak. The Syrians, of course, came to their aid. There was some shooting going on, bombings, etc. The Nasser connection was there, it was obvious, so was the connection with the King of Iraq. But it seemed distant. The real problem was the confessional problem.

The Marines landed, they took control of the airport and moved into town. It was always maintained, erroneously of course, that it was bloodless. At least some Marines were killed at the airport, by snipers. There was never a confrontation between the Marines

and whoever it was, but at night time, when the Marines were patrolling the perimeter of the airport they were killed. Thirty or so were killed, I was told. There were some real moments. The Ambassador at the time was Robert McClintock, a tough eccentric character, but marvelous in many ways. When they evacuated the Embassy most of the wives, my wife included, went to Rome. And they kept a skeleton Embassy, so to speak. I stayed, though I was among the lowest ranking officers of the Embassy. But I had a commission as a Consular Officer and as a Secretary in the diplomatic service. I was the only one in the Embassy who had both. The Ambassador wanted all of his skeleton staff to have diplomatic titles. And he wanted to have somebody with a Consular title. Now my boss, who was the Consul Fred Bohne, was a staff officer, without Diplomatic status. So I stayed. During that time a couple of interesting things happened. The Marines patrolled the downtown area around the outside of the “Basta” which then was the Muslim neighborhood of Beirut, a rabbit warren. There was actually a gate that you had to pass through to get into the Basta, and all of the houses of prostitution were just on the other side of the gate. It was a very interesting setup, because the other side of the square (Bab Idriss) was where many of the gold shops made part of the souks. At any rate, the Marines would patrol in a jeep armed with a 50-caliber machine gun every day. Once in broad daylight armed men came out of the Basta and captured the jeep, marines, and weapons and took them into their neighborhood. Enough people saw it happen that it was reported to the Embassy and the task force commander immediately. The commander of the task force was Admiral “Cat” Brown, he was, I think, then head of the Sixth Fleet. There was a hasty staff meeting called at the Embassy. The Admiral hemmed and hawed and wasn't certain what to do: Ambassador said he knew exactly what to do. He asked for a tank. As it was related to me, he went with the tank and a public address system and parked it in front of the Basta gate. The tank's 90-mm gun was pointed into the Basta and the interpreter on the loudspeaker announced that the gun would begin firing in three minutes if the marines, the jeep and weapons were not returned immediately. One shell will destroy X square meters, two shells will do more, etc. Many people will die. Within three minutes the Marines and the Jeep were out. Every last bullet came out. Cat Brown was astounded,

because that's the last thing he would have done. He is reported to have asked McClintock if he would have really fired into the Basta. The answer was “of course.”

Then we learned that in the town of Tripoli, a Muslim stronghold in the north, where Rashid Karami one of the leaders of the revolt came from, a group of American missionaries wanted to leave and were not able to. They did get a radio message to the Embassy, on what passed for an E&E net then. They said they were in danger of their lives and needed help to get out. McClintock held a staff meeting. As I recall the Political Counselor said their were Muslim roadblocks along the highway so that a rescue by convoy would be dangerous. An armed military convoy was suggested. It was turned down. We could not risk an armed confrontation with the peasant militias and face the resulting bad press. (This was the same ambassador who had threatened an entire neighborhood with a tank!) So I heard the Ambassador say, “Walter, go down to the port and commandeer any American vessel that can make the trip.” I had no idea how to commandeer a vessel, or indeed whether I could! The Ambassador saw the quizzical look on my face and caught me in the hall. “Find an American-registered vessel in port and commandeer it for purposes of the government of the United States.” I went to my office and scanned the consular regulations and the Code of Federal Regulations and found nothing to help me. So I went down to the port anyway. There were two vessels in port, there was one huge freighter, an enormous thing, and there was a seismic research vessel that belonged to a Mobile, Alabama company. It was a magnificent thing, 150-feet long, modern, and it had millions of dollars worth of equipment on board for seismic research. They were on their way to the Gulf. The crew was made up of men from the Mobile area and Louisiana. Their English was nearly a foreign language. I told them that I had instructions from the Ambassador of the United States to take over the vessel. They thought I was crazy. The captain said “You can't do that!” And I said, “Oh yes, I can, the Ambassador represents the President of the United States and if he wants to take your ship for purposes of our government, he can do that.” He thought a minute and then said “Okay, give me a piece of paper.” I went back to the office and wrote something up on a piece of embossed paper

decorated with a red seal and ribbons. I signed it, and the FSNs and driver signed it in Arabic. I returned to the ship and handed it to the Captain who said “Okay, just so mah ass is covered.” When I told him we would be going to Tripoli at night he felt a good deal less covered. He wanted charts of the coast line which was dotted with rocks and shoals. We had none. Then he asked if someone who knew the coast could not go along. We had no one. “You know how much this boat is worth,” he said, and added “When do you want to go?” I answered “We have to go tonight, to rescue a bunch of people in trouble, we can't go during the day.” He was scared to death, the boat was a huge responsibility, he was going to sail up an unknown coast studded with submerged rocks and outcroppings of all kinds. But at that point he seemed to see the venture as an adventure and became almost enthusiastic. We left a little before sunset. I forget how long it took, but it was several hours. We got to Tripoli in the moonlight with only the outline of the city ahead. The captain said, “Now, I don't know how to get into that dock. I don't know where the channel is. And I've got $5 million worth of boat here.” As we neared the port, with our own lights blazing, we started getting blinking lights from the pier, automobile headlights obviously. The captain dropped the anchor. I got into a dinghy with one of the crew and we putt-putted to the pier. There we found a small group of missionaries, about a dozen altogether, with half a dozen cars flicking headlights off and on. “We want to go back with you,” one said, “but most of the people are taking the road to Beirut.” So, we took them on board, their luggage, dogs and cats, and had a pleasant, incident free daylight sail back to Beirut. It was mid-morning when we got back, and there at the pier was Ambassador McClintock with the press, Time Magazine, Newsweek, the Washington Post, the New York Times, you name it, all the press waited with their cameras to record the arrival. Ambassador McClintock and the missionaries with the boat in the background. As a matter of fact, he did make Newsweek magazine with the story about the besiege missionaries who were saved with a bold stroke.

Of course, at the same time, the rest of the missionaries had arrived by road. When they finally got there and came into the Consulate I asked if they had had any trouble. They

asserted they had none. There were roadblocks, but the people were very friendly and waved them through. But I had had an exciting boat trip, risked a several million dollar boat that I had taken over with no legal ground to stand on. It was that kind of post. Never dull.

Then there was the case of the Mafia courier. This guy turned up at the consulate to register with a passport that said “John Green.” A few days later he was arrested for the inability to pay his hotel bill. I visited him in Jail. He asked me to get in touch with his girl friend to see if she could pay his bill and get him out. I found her working a bar stool in one of the less fashionable night clubs in town. She couldn't or wouldn't help. Meanwhile the police went through his belongings and found a large fortune in bonds. The bonds it turned out had been stolen some years earlier in Montreal in what up to then had been the largest robbery in Canada.In sum, the stolen bonds had been moved to one of the less reputable banks in the Cayman Islands until the clamor had died down. Green was charged with delivering them to Israel where they would be sold. Coming by way of Beirut was a particularly stupid move since he could not legally pass to Israel from Lebanon and would have to go back to Cyprus to make it. At any rate Green languished in Jail until after I left the post with the FBI trying to extradite him to the U.S.

Q: Did you get a feel for how this Embassy operated? I mean you had this very divided country, you had the Maronites who were Christian, who worked very hard at cultivating foreigners, from what I gather, and then your Muslims, who were not as plugged in, you might say, did you...

SILVA: They changed overnight. I think the Muslims always felt somewhat peripheral in their own society. Before the invasion, before the landing of the Marines, my wife had good experiences. We had a small child, three or four years old, we lived in an apartment on Rue Jeanne D'Arc. The caretaker, the concierge, Joseph, lived on the ground floor. Joseph, despite his name, was a Muslim. Joseph adored our son, absolutely adored him, he just huddled around him and liked to take him to the store where you could buy little matchbox cars — and Joseph didn't make that kind of money. But he was delighted

with the child. After the invasion he wanted nothing to do with him, absolutely nothing. He changed completely. Mary used to go down and shop on the main street, El Hamra street, and they were all friendly to her. After the invasion — nothing. One guy in a kaffiyah spit at her. It was changed, absolutely changed, as though the Muslims felt somehow empowered by the invasion. At that time, after the evacuation, I took in two UN pilots. I had an apartment and I was alone, and the UN had asked for billets. So I took these two swedes into our apartment. They were piloting Piper Cubs and doing surveillance over the Lebanese-Syrian border. And they would come back at night, usually very angry. Eventually it all came out. They had continually spotted mule trains, donkey trains coming over the mountains loaded with ammunition, guns, etc., and they reported it to their headquarters. The head of the UN force at the time was an Indian general, from India, and he would accept none of it. They would tell him over and over again that the Syrians were major players in the fighting but he would not accept it, because it brought in complications. He wanted to put it in a pigeon hole and hoped it would go away. Our Embassy reported it, I think probably as a result of my reports to the Political Section. Nobody paid a hell of a lot of attention to it, though it was a major factor in what went on and what's happening today, with the present Syrian role in Lebanon.

Q: We were talking about the situation there, that all of you were very much involved in things, of course it was very small at the time.

SILVA: There was a curfew from 6:00 to 6:00. Everyone in the Embassy got a curfew pass. It was a very Middle Eastern arrangement. There was a severe curfew, you could be shot down in the street. And the day the curfew was established we got passes for everyone in the Embassy. Within a week it seemed everybody in Beirut had a curfew pass! The nightclubs never closed, the bars never closed. We were in a sort of Gilbert and Sullivan curfew. But you know the fact that there had been the evacuation and the wives were all gone, families were absent, brought the members of the Embassy together. Because there was some danger...there were a couple of times when bullets were fired through my windows, and one evening a group from the Embassy was having dinner in a

colleague's apartment when a bomb went off in the street below. That sort of thing tended to bring people together. There was undeniably a delicious sense of risk when you ignored the curfew. And we went places that I never would have gone as a married person — the bars, the belly-dance places. There was a sense of camaraderie among the staff that you don't always get. And the discussion was always about Lebanon, what was going on, who was involved, that sort of thing.

Q: Did you find yourself captured by any particular segment of Lebanese social life?

SILVA: The Maronites from the very beginning. Most of the local staff, not all but most, were Maronites. The Maronites tended to be better educated, they were schooled by the French, a lot of them had been to France for university, so they were the ones the Embassy tended to hire. When you got down into the administrative part of the Embassy, the blue collars of the General Services unit, they tended to be Muslims. But anyplace where it took some skill at writing they were Maronites. When I did a stint of six months on the rotation, I was an economic officer for six months, and I was the disbursing officer for six months too. In the disbursing office we had one Muslim, one Maronite and one Druze. Very unusual. And they got along very well, even during the worst troubles. But then in a situation like that, thrown into an environment of multiple sects, consciously sectarian, they were very careful among themselves, they would never get into religious discussions. You never got that.

Q: When the Embassy was small did you get the feeling that the Ambassador or political officers or others could reach out to other sectors of the political spectrum to find out how things were going?

SILVA: Well they were seeing the elected officials on a fairly regular basis, and the major figures of the opposition. There was a leading figure of the opposition, a major leader, Saeb Salaam, who lived in a villa right next to the golf course. The opposite side of the course bordered on a Palestinian refugee camp. So when we played golf there was always

a chance of some gunfire. We'd call off the game and then go back. Saeb Salaam was supposed to be very anti-American, yet there were people from the Embassy who saw him. The political counselor saw him, I don't think as often as he ought to have. But then to develop the kind of entree you ought to have is difficult in the middle of a civil war.

Q: Did you have the feeling we were trying to disengage by being overly associated with the Christians or...

SILVA: No, I don't think so. I think we were really trying to play an honest broker role. We were committed to trying. Perhaps the error was we were too willing to make compromises in order to achieve that and the compromises led to strengthening the Syrian factor of the equation and weakening that part of Lebanese society that made the system work, which happened to be mostly Christian — Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox. My God, you had 10-15 major sects involved. But those who made things work, ran the businesses, tended to be the Christian element. Even the Palestinian refugees who assimilated into Lebanese society and became successful businessmen tended to be Christians too.

Q: Was it quite clear that Nasser was not a big player in the game from the Embassy point of view? Because from abroad it was viewed as a nationalistic, Nasseristic system.

SILVA: Well, the Nasserist movement was the catalyst in Lebanon, but then it took on a life of its own. I don't think anywhere else in Nasser's little world did religious issues play the central role in quite the same way.

Q: At this time when you were there I was in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia and we were concerned about the stability of the Saudi government and there were a lot of pictures on thermoses and everything else in the [souk] of Nasser around. And we were, you know, sort of, when the landings came we thought there might be some sort of mass uprising, which there wasn't. What was the general feeling in the Embassy about the landings? A good thing, a bad thing?

SILVA: Many, I think, in the Embassy thought it was stupid and unnecessary. And the fact that it took place with such apparent ease made it look ridiculous. Threading their way through bikini-clad sunbathers and that sort of thing. It was held up to ridicule by the American press. And it was held up to ridicule there. Necessary for what? It was sold partly on the basis that we needed this force to permit the evacuation of Americans, that was absolutely ridiculous. You could have driven south with no danger into Israel, the airport was never closed, there were sea lanes wide open, lots of ships around. There would be no problem.

Q: Where did it come from? Was the Ambassador calling for this?

SILVA: Yeah, I think Robert McClintock enjoyed the military aspect of his job, where he could flex his muscles.

Q: When you were doing this on the Consular side, was there a rush of people trying to get out of Lebanon?

SILVA: No. I was on the other side, but nonetheless there was not a rush on the visa side either. There were a large number of Lebanese-Americans who lived there at the time, they weren't trying to escape either.

Q: Well, you left there in 1960, and then what did you do?

SILVA: I went back to the Department. I was assigned to INR. I recognized what it was. I was assigned to ARA in INR, and in ARA we had a biographic information unit. I was handling Cuba and a bunch of other funny little countries in Central America. The BI guy next to me, he's still in the Foreign Service, he wrote very laudatory biographies on a fellow named Castro. I think that unit was responsible for the delay in recognizing the character of Castro's Cuba. He was painted as a revolutionary, but one of ours, a guy who was going to change Latin America for the better.

I decided to get out of INR but naturally a transfer was out of the question. But I had a friend in Admin. who worked for William Crockett. This guy was Number two or number three, he had been the Admin. Counselor in Beirut, Adrian Middleton. He was a wonderful fellow, a good friend. One day we were at his house and he mentioned that they were going to open all these new embassies in Africa, and I really ought to get the hell out of INR because that was a dead end. So I said, sure, I'd like to go to Africa and open an Embassy. And the next thing I knew, maybe a day later, I got a call from Crockett's office. I was convoked, and at the same time Dick Moose was there too escaping from whatever assignment he had. I forget who the other officers were. There were four embassies being opened, including the Republic of Chad. They were all opening at the same time. Crockett, seemed a friendly guy, nice guy, and he said: “You go out there and open these embassies. Here's the regulations, read them, but just get it done no matter what the regulations say. Screw it all, get the place open, do what you've gotta do!” So I took off with my briefcase containing most of the FAM, and the famous one-time pad, the coding system at the time, which of course was highly classified. I had my Royal portable typewriter and a package containing the American Embassy seal and an American flag. When I landed at Fort Lamy I was met by the chief of protocol and a small band played appropriate music, which I think they thought was our national anthem but it sounded like anything but. And I was escorted to the hotel, which was later destroyed during one of many rebellious outbreaks in the city and has since been rebuilt.

G. Mennen (Soapy) Williams, the former governor of Michigan, who was then the Assistant Secretary, had made a trip to Africa the year before, accompanied by Crockett and a few other people, and had assured all the governments of about-to-be-independent countries that they would all get embassies and ambassadors. When he stopped in Fort Lamy he was cornered at the airport by a Lebanese businessman, who I think is now dead, George Abtour who was a real entrepreneur in the traditional Lebanese way — he had a store, he had property, he made things and sold things, he did everything you can imagine for a buck. And he convinced Soapy Williams that he had a house that would make a perfect

Embassy. And Soapy looked at it, saw a sunken bathtub and a couple of big mirrors, and agreed. He actually rented this house with an option to buy. On my second day there I moved into it. I had to buy a bed, I bought a table and a chair and I moved into this house. The house was of typical Lebanese construction in the colonies, that is, it was built in stages. First one concrete block section surrounded by a veranda, one big room and a kitchen. Then they had added a wing, three bedrooms and three baths. Small bath units with showers. To go from the living/dining room to the bedroom, you went outside via the veranda— motel-like.

The only problem was that when the dry season came and the ground dried out underneath, one section of the house separated from the other so that you could put your arm through where the bedroom wall had once joined the kitchen wall. I moved in. Later an FSS couple arrived and moved into bedroom number two. She was supposed to be the embassy secretary and he was to be the jack-of-all-trades, General Services, code clerk, etc. But before all that happened...I had been assured that though we were taking this classification system with us, there would be no classified messages except in the direst of emergencies. It was going to be unlikely as hell. And then in the middle of the night I got a long classified telegram about Fidel Castro, who was going to speak to the UNGA. This was '61, something like that. There was an expectation that he might make anti-American statements. We were beginning to realize he was not the friendly agrarian revolutionary that we had hoped. So the Department wanted all diplomatic posts to approach their respective chiefs of state to enlist their support for the United States in whatever came out of the Castro visit. It was a long telegram, full of talking points, and of course I had to spend the night decoding this thing with my one-time pad. And I typed up a note, a foreign office note, on plain old paper with my Royal typewriter in pretty good French— it wasn't great, but it was probably better than the chief of state's French.

First thing in the morning I called up the Presidency, the government house, formerly the residence of the French governor general. The President of the country was then Francois Tombalbaye, the first president of independent Chad. He had been a moniteur of the

school system and one of the most highly educated men in the country. He had gone, I guess, through the equivalent of elementary school and was licensed as a moniteur, which I guess was a grade or two below a teacher. Reputedly the best educated in the country. (That made good copy but in fact there were other Chadians of equal or superior education. He was a decent sort of a fellow, in a way. But anyway, to my surprise, he answered the phone. The country was so newly independent that every minister, and there were about 30 ministers, had a Frenchman at his shoulder to keep things going the way they wanted them going. Of course in the presidency as well; he had no real power. He had plenty of time to answer his own phone, why not? I told him that I had a demarche to make to his government and he said, “Come right away. Come on.” I guess it was his first demarche. So I leaped into our newly rented Peugeot 404 and drove over there with my briefcase, which to a great extent was the Embassy. I had the seal up and the flag was flying, but everything else was in that briefcase. I drove to the Presidency where Tombalbaye met me on the stairs and ushered me into what I guessed was the state dining room, now the meeting place of the cabinet. And all of the ministers were there, every one of the thirty or so. Dressed variously. It was nine o'clock in the morning. The foreign minister was about 22 years old, the son of a prime chief in the eastern part of the country. He was dressed in a tuxedo. But others had long white gowns or business suits or kaffiyahs, you name it, they were all dressed more or less in a way to identify their region of the country. The Chad was ethnically diverse to say the least. I announced that I had this message to deliver from my government, the President said “s'il vous plait.” They all sat down and listened attentively. I don't think any of them was completely ignorant of French, but real French, even American college level French was a cut above most of them. Anyway, I read off this long thing that I had laboriously decoded and translated, and finished up and they were all very attentive, I might almost say, rapt. I ventured, “If you've got any questions I'd be happy to answer them.” No one said anything. Finally one of them piped up, I think it was the foreign minister, and said: “M. Silva, Cuba, qu'est que c'est?” I realized that they hadn't understood much of what I said. They heard the word Cuba in there, which sounded foreign, and they asked “What is that?” And I answered, “It's

a country.” The next question was “Where is this country?” So I opened up my briefcase, and I had what every foreign service officer needs, a National Geographic map of the world. It's only about 2x3 feet or so. I laid it on the table and they all huddled around. Someone observed: “Voila, l'Afrique!” And another voice suggested “Oui, ici le Chad!” They were having a good time looking at the map. “Now Cuba, where's this Cuba?” the President asked. So I pointed to Cuba. Florida is # inch long on this map; Cuba is a mere speck. I pointed to Cuba and said, “That's the island of Cuba, the country of Cuba.” And the President said “Oh, c'est petite, tres petite. Si ca vous gene, pourqois pas la prendre?” If that bothers you, why don't you just take it! A direct and simple solution. Of course when I reported it the desk though I was kidding. And when it did come to a vote in the UNGA, the Chad followed the French lead. It was a fascinating post. In the first year I was there...

Q: You were there from 1961 to 1963?

SILVA: Yes, almost three years actually, I don't think anyone's served that long there since. Anyway, it was then still very colonial; it was still being subsidized by the French and is even now, so the French had a good deal to say about national policies. In those first years the French were everywhere, in every office. If you wanted to know what was going on you really had to ask the French.

Q: I heard one of our people say that you used to call up, “Laissez moi parler avec le blanc.”

SILVA: That is certainly apocryphal. I never did and I don't think any one at the post did. In any event in that post-independence period, you ended up talking to “le blanc” willy-nilly. Outside the capital you still had the prefects running things and they were all white, and those who ran the gendarmerie were all white. Some were brutes, some of them were impossible. I went down to a major town in the south which was the center and capital of the cotton growing area of the country. Of course, they had no business growing cotton. Cotton exhausts the soil like few other plants do and the soil there was already poor, a

savannah. And yet the French had them grow cotton because they wanted the country to develop some sort of independent agricultural enterprise to make the country a going concern. So when the cotton culture was at its height, cotton from the Chad delivered to Brazzaville was more expensive than Egyptian cotton delivered to Paris.

So they grew cotton. I'm told, I wasn't there at the time, that in the first few years of the culture of cotton it was done under the whip. It was done by levying labor from the village. They were marched out to the fields to hoe and plant and cultivate and weed the cotton, and then pick it — under the whip, literally, with overseers. Reminiscent of the old South. They always had trouble with labor, they had to pay them and in the beginning they paid them once a week, very little, but they had to pay them. And the minute the natives would earn enough to buy a t-shirt or pair of shorts and sunglasses and maybe a Bic pen, they'd never see them again. They'd leave the village and go to Fort Lamy, to escape the levy. They were treated, well, the French have a way of sometimes treating native peoples very badly. It was not a happy situation. One prefect I recall had a perimeter fence built around his funny little square cinder block building, it looked like a tiny fortress. The fence was wired, electrified. There were times when the supplicants who came to see the prefect for licenses and permits and various kinds of things they needed, would line up in great numbers and lean against the fence. The prefect would throw the switch, give them a good jolt. He thought that was very, very funny. Typical of the prevailing attitude among the French “colons.” You can see that what's happened since has some relationship to French management in that period. The French had closest relations with the people of the south: what agriculture there was in the south, the political leadership, to the extent that there was any, came from the south. The south tended to be Christian, some animists, but they were not Muslims. In the north they were Muslims, and the French seemed to think of Muslims as the enemy then. In the north they had a camel corps called the “Meharists.” They were military, paramilitary if you like, the police of the desert. They wore all white gowns, white turbans, and red leather trappings, gun belts, whatever. They were very striking, and they rode camels. They had units of about 19 or 20 men on camels and

each unit was run by a French gendarme, usually a sergeant. I suspect that at times they weren't even noncoms, they were just gendarmes. I was told then that most of the gendarmes were police who had screwed up somewhere and were shipped off to the colonies to repent. The Chad was no longer a colony, but it was still, after independence, being used that way. The troops of the Meharist corps, were recruited from prisons in Chad, they were murderers, rapists, people of the worst kind who ended up in jail. And the way they got out of jail was to volunteer for this corps, where they had a long period of service, ten or twelve years, whatever it was, but it was better than prison. Now they served only in the northern desert of the country and had for a very long time, going back to the 1920s, to the time of the “pacification of the Chad” and the establishment of Fort Lamy. In fact they were part of the continuing French pacification program, and they were there to prevent the piracy of outlaw bands who preyed on caravans. After patrols of months in length, they came into Fort Lamy once a year, and camped across the street from where we lived. They were no trouble. When my six year old son's curiosity got the best of him and my wife took him over to look at the camels the troops were delighted. The gave him camel rides and made over him in ways calculated to spoil him completely. They were gentle but their scarred faces testified to the brutalities of the colonial system. It was easy to see the roots of the sort of thing that is going on now in France and in Algeria.

Q: We're talking about the problem of fundamental Islam in Algeria.

SILVA: Although the French had been involved in Muslim countries, Morocco, Algeria, their slice of black Africa, I don't believe they were ever comfortable in dealing with those peoples except from a position of superiority. Definitely the French did not like this increasing Muslim occupation of Chad. The French sent troops to counter the Libyan intrusions into Chad and they probably would again.

Q: Well, in the time we're talking about, between 1961-63, what did you gather were American interests in the area?

SILVA: None. We didn't belong there. Except as a contact with a member of the United Nations, a country with a UN vote. Certainly we had no commercial or trade interests there. It was a tiny Embassy then, three officers.

Q: What was the Embassy like?

SILVA: Well, we eventually got an Ambassador. He was later, I heard, cashiered from his next post for sexual misbehavior. The DCM/Political/Economic officer was Fred Chapin. He arrived six months after I did. Then I was the rest: Admin, Consular, USIS, etc. Eventually USIS turned up with two officers and a library and I thought that was an exaggeration. We were already as large as we needed to be to do the little work that needed to be done. We were instructed at one point to devise a suitable AID program that would cost, if I recall, about $250,000. We discussed it with the Chadian. They would have liked a steel mill, or an automobile factory. Eventually they settled for a flourmill. An absurd idea since the wheat was imported. But AID got its foot in the door. The dispatched a program officer to the Chad, he did nothing for a year. After I left the office started to grow. (When I was back there a couple of years ago, AID well outnumbered the rest of the mission and “ran” a piddling little program that could have been operated from another post, or even Washington.)

Much of what we in the Embassy did back then wasn't taken seriously. The early reports out of the Embassy, were not taken seriously, including one saying that the president lived in fear that he would be murdered by black magic. Still the man was scared. Though ostensibly a Christian, Tombalbaye continued to maintain his animist beliefs. The Desk didn't understand. I think now they may, now that we've had more experience in Africa they may be beginning to understand. But at the time I don't think there was a lot of interest. There were occasional messages about international organizations and once the Organization for African Unity got established there may have been messages dealing with

what we would like them to do. A waste. At least during my three years there, there was always the Frenchman in the background making the decisions.

Q: So they were doing it according to French politics...

SILVA: When it came, for example, to the vote at the UN that I had a small part in, France abstained. Chad abstained. Even though the President said “We'll do exactly what you want. This guy (Castro) is outrageous, he's got a little country that doesn't exactly deserve to exist.” But in the end, they abstained, which is what France did. So at least in those three years in terms of influencing the government, it would have been better influencing them from Paris than from Fort Lamy.

Q: Just to get a little feel for the Foreign Service side of things, not to dwell on personalities, but personalities are important too. I know there were problems of many of these small African posts because Europeanists were brought in to make them Ambassadors. These were people who had been Political Counselors or Ambassadors in the European countries, totally unfit. At that point it was a place really for the young, full of adventure, full of piss and vinegar and all that. And you'd bring these rather sedate, urbanized people in and they weren't very good. And I think we've changed that over a period of time, but how did you...was that a problem?

SILVA: Oh yes, absolutely. There were four new embassies, as I said, four new chiefs of mission. The Chad, the Central African Republic, Benin and another I don't recall at the moment. I heard the four Ambassadors referred to as Briggs' boys. They had all served with Ambassador Ellis Briggs in, I believe, Korea. Briggs had a lot of clout in the Department and was taking care of his boys. So they got their embassies at about the same time that Briggs finally retired. It was sort of his farewell gift to his boys. I don't think any of them knew the least thing about Africa and none of them had a real interest in Africa. They used to meet quarterly at each other's embassies, a rotation. I don't think that our little Ambassador ever did anything, ever! He may have met with Tombalbaye

two or three times, more social than anything else. Fred Chapin used to see the guy who was foreign minister finally. An impressive guy named Toura Gaba. He got a little independent though, was later arrested and thrown into a pit in the old fortress of Faya Largeau where he died of starvation. He was an anti-white African, very anti-white. He used to see Chapin, but it was mostly to ridicule Chapin and ridicule us. He was not a source of useful information, if we needed information. You could still learn more in Paris than in Port Lamy.

Q: Was there any concern about Soviet penetration at that time?

SILVA: No, if there was any concern about penetration it was about penetration of the Muslims. That was a big concern of the French and of our Embassy. That is, it was obvious that they were growing...it was like the encroachment of the desert. You could measure it year by year. I remember reports that Islam had moved another 10 or 20 or 50 miles south, along with the sand.

Q: Well, did we see Islam as being a nationalistic, anti-American force?

SILVA: Yes and no. It was a foreign force. Then, I think, probably correctly, it was seen as a kind of destabilizing fifth column primarily coming from the Sudan into black Africa. It was not seen as in the best interest of the Chad, and not in our interest (or the West's interest) as well. The Libyan thing came much later.

Q: Walt, they got you out of Fort Lamy in 1963. How did a nice boy like you end up in Greek training.

SILVA: How did I end up in Greek training? I guess I had an interest in Greek as a freshman in school and it seemed like the thing to do at the time, to study a hard language, hard by definition of the Department, and one that would be interesting. I chose Greek, and I spent a year at FSI studying Greek. It was interesting. It was the year in which Kennedy was assassinated. I was in class when the news came. It ended for the day.

Everybody went home. That was the only break in the year. Except for that, the year was fun.

Q: Did you get anything from the Greek teachers about the Greek mentality and all that? I'm saying this because I took Serbian a couple of years before and I certainly got a very strong dosage of Serbian mentality.

SILVA: Oh, yeah. I don't know if he's still there, but the teacher at the time was excellent, he and his wife were both teachers. He was not a highly educated Greek, secondary school probably. She was a university graduate. Neither of them was from Athens, they were small town people, and I got a picture of Greek society from them that really held up when I got into Greece itself, that these indeed were what Greeks were like. Likeable, sure, but also very difficult to deal with, very set in their ways, very sure of themselves. As you say, you get a picture of what these people are like from the teachers. I guess that's the advantage in FSI not being able to pay to get the highest quality teachers; they get people from that strata of society.

Q: This is '63, '64, I imagine from time-to-time you'd get over and talk to the people from the desk and have area training and all that.

SILVA: No, no area training. I went over to the Desk maybe once or twice in that year. There wasn't a hell of a lot of that going on at that time. Greece was part of the NEA Bureau and Greek, Turkish and Iranian affairs were lumped together under a sub-rubric. There wasn't a particularly intense interest in Greece at that time.

Q: Did you have any feel for what Americans interest in Greece, I mean U.S. interests in Greece were?

SILVA: Yeah. NATO. That was the big thing, the flank, the southern flank of NATO. But we got very little preparation in terms of the seething enmity between the Greeks and the Turks. We got a little bit of that from the teacher, but in my business with the desk that was

never mentioned. There was some discussion of the coming elections in Greece. But I had the feeling that Greek affairs did not occupy a large place in NEA.

Q: What was your assignment when you went out there?

SILVA: Economic officer, which there meant Commercial/Economic officer. There was a commercial attach# assigned from the Department of Commerce — totally worthless, had been a deputy district type in Cleveland or someplace like that, and was being rewarded before retirement by an assignment to Greece. And we had an Economic Counselor who was also AID Director. People tend to forget that we were in the AID business with Greece until the mid to late '60s.

Q: You went to Athens first?

SILVA: I went to Athens. We had two so-called junior economic officers who divided up the work. I tended to work for the Commercial Attach#, the other guy tended to work for the AID side of the economic counselor's job.

The counselor was a bright and calculating guy who used the assignment to feather his nest with a follow-on job. I did not have a good relationship with the Attach#. I know he distrusted anyone in the Foreign Service and thought I was out to undercut him. Though I never intended to feed his fears, I'm afraid it happened anyway. The Greek/American Chamber of Commerce was a happy if sleepy little group that had never done anything. I though we ought to breathe some life into it and suggested we start a Chamber monthly magazine to promote U.S. products. The members liked the ideas but my boss didn't. I think it was because it wasn't his idea. That tended to be the level of discourse in our relationship. But anyway, the Greeks liked it and it worked out well and I think it's still being published. I tried to convince him that we should sponsor visits to the United States by Greek businessmen. They'd pay for it, of course, but we could facilitate these visits. He didn't like it. I think in all the time that I was aware of what was going on in Athens, one

visit ever took place under the auspices of the Commercial Office and the Chamber of Commerce.

Q: Was he lazy, do you think?

SILVA: Sure, that was part of it. He had a bureaucratic mentality. You do things a certain way, and the way had to be within the compass of his intellectual competence — which was not really broad. But mostly he wanted to lie low, enjoy his perks, and not draw attention to himself.

Q: How about trade disputes? The Greeks have a reputation for the last three or four thousand years of being very sharp traders. How did you find, when there would be problems, did you run across this?

SILVA: There were lots of trade disputes. They were constant. But I don't think any of them amounted to very much. We had one major problem, and that was the ESSO/Pappas complex in northern Greece. As far as I know it was a unique arrangement for ESSO. Tom Pappas, a successful Greek-American businessman sank a lot of ESSO money into the refinery in Thessaloniki, and there were all kinds of allegations, none of them have been satisfactorily answered, about bribery, the involvement of various people in the promotion of this thing, including Americans in the Embassy who it was hinted at the time had an interest in promoting the ESSO/Pappas thing. I think more recently the thing may have gone belly up one way or another. It's no longer what it used to be. Tom Pappas long ago lost control, but he was well-known as a sharp, Greek-American businessman and people were willing to believe anything. I think some of it was true.

Q: Did he have any, what was Tom Pappas' connection with the Embassy?

SILVA: He was the pride of the economic section. As a matter of fact, when the economic counselor retired from the job in Athens, he went to work for ESSO/Pappas. it was that kind of relationship, it was very close. Pappas saw the Embassy as being there to promote

his interest, and the Embassy thought his interest coincided with the interests of the United States.

Q: Did he prove to be much of a source of information about the economic world of Greece?

SILVA: I don't think so. He knew a lot of what was going on in the banking system, but so did the Embassy. The Embassy had some local employees, one in particular, who had been an employee at the National Bank for a long time. Came to work for the Embassy, and when he retired from the Embassy, became a vice-president at the same bank. He knew exactly what was going on. He was first rate. John Enepekides. Absolutely first rate. So we didn't need Pappas' sort of biased view.

Q: I knew Pappas vaguely. I used to see him around when I was there from '70-'74, and I had the dubious honor of delivering a subpoena on him during the Watergate business, since he was President Nixon's treasurer, or something like that.

While you were there from '64-'66 in Athens, the Ambassador was whom? Was it Henry Labouisse

SILVA: Henry Labouisse was the first one. Followed by Phil Talbot, followed by Henry Tasca.

Q: How would you describe Labouisse, who was a veteran Foreign Service type?

SILVA: Imperious, to a degree, I think mostly by association with his wife, who was certainly imperial. He was a nice man, very quiet, dignified, what one would expect a diplomat in the old mold to be. That was Henry. I'm not sure that Henry knew a lot about what was going on, or even worried about it. He was the Ambassador! The traditional kind of Ambassador. His wife was one of the traditional ambassador's wives. They're not all like her. But she was absolutely, I thought, first rate. A lot of people hated her, but I thought

she was first rate. She really knew her business and she looked upon it as a job and worked at it. She really worked at it. She ran receptions and cocktail parties and dinners like a drill sergeant. Everything went off the way it was supposed to be, she organized, the staff was there 15-20 minutes early. She gave the staff a pep talk like a drill sergeant: “And your job will be...” And you were assigned to different parts of the house, and it worked! She was great, I thought, but resented by many of the wives. Those were the days when Mrs. Labouisse, when they ran low on representation funds, would not find it offensive to ask wives of members of the staff to bring in canapes.

Q: What about Talbot?

SILVA: Phil Talbot, let's see. I often though that Phil was a problem because he was very bright, knew a good deal about what was going on, but in a kind of an intellectual sense. He lacked, and its often true of people like him, the ability to empathize, to put himself in the shoes of the Greeks, to understand what they wanted, what they were doing and what they wanted. I don't think he ever really understood that. A lot of things went on under Phil Talbot that were unfortunate. I think part of it was that the intelligence part of the Mission played a much bigger role than it should have.

Q: That was my impression during the '70-'74 period too. The CIA...

SILVA: ...and the DIA...

Q: These were dominant elements.

SILVA: Indeed, and I think it started then. I was not aware in any way of it with Labouisse. I think he would not have put up with it. But Phil Talbot came out of academia, and whether he thought it was the right way to go or simply didn't know how to control it I don't know. But anyway, that's the way it was. There were dumb things. The competition was between DIA and CIA, of course. In some ways DIA had better entree; for one thing, the Greek opposition to the government was the army, and they knew everybody in the army. The

other source of information was the Royal Palace, and they had that wired. Not literally, but they had a guy whose name I can't remember, he was a Hawaiian by birth, a sergeant, who was one of the great military experts in karate and other martial arts. And he taught the King (and Juan Carlos of Spain when he visited) how to defend himself. So I guess on a regular basis this guy was at the Royal Palace teaching the King to break bricks with his head, or whatever.

Q: This was the future King of Spain, but at that time he was sort of the Crown Prince on hold.

SILVA: Was he married then to Sofia?

Q: I think he was at that time, Sofia being the daughter of Queen Frederika

SILVA: But he used to come over regularly and they'd both be taught by this sergeant how to go about this karate business. The sergeant really had an in to the Royal Palace. If you wanted to know anything about the Royal Palace you'd ask the military, because they had this pipeline. The competition between the two agencies sort of led to speculation among members of the Embassy about the degree to which American intelligence was actually involved in the coup of April 1967. The Greeks of course were sure that the CIA engineered the whole thing. I think the agency should bear some of the onus but I frankly don't think they were good enough to pull off the coup—they were not an impressive group—though their activities may have made the coup easier for the colonels.

Q: It became almost an article of faith with the Greeks that it was a CIA run operation. Tell me, when I was there in '70-'74 during the time the colonels took over from the coup, something I found rather disturbing was that so much of our intelligence and military operation there used Greek Americans. Obviously it's a difficult language, you do this, but the problem is that the normal first-generation immigrant is very conservative, they tend to side with the conservative side of things. This is true in almost every immigrant group, with

few exceptions. And also they come with Greek prejudices instead of American prejudices. Was this true both on the CIA and the military side, or not?

SILVA: I think the attach#'s office had no Greek Americans at the time. They had a couple of guys who were in this Foreign Affairs Specialist Training, FAST, thing, getting their specialization. Neither of them were Greek but both spoke good Greek. On the other side, on the Agency side, they were all non-Greeks except for the outsiders, those who were working outside, who would turn up regularly. Absolutely fascinating operation. Outsiders! Everybody knew who they were. One of them, who I knew best was born John Miltiades, and became John Milton. His story was that he dropped by parachute during the war into the mountains with a money belt full of gold sovereigns, supposedly to support those dissidents that we liked. That was his job, and he had been in Greece ever since, from '45 until whatever. Twenty-five years later he was still there. He was a nice guy, a very amusing character. I talked to him often in the Embassy snack bar. In any event he was a very amusing fellow, he had lots of war stories to tell and had known all the characters of the Greek civil war. I think by now he's gone, of course. Then he was in his late '40's, something like that. He had interesting stories, like the Gorgopotamos Bridge affair, where an old wartime explosive went off during a ceremony at the Bridge, and killed a lot of people. Of course in the press and public opinion, the CIA did it. Then it was the Americans who did it one way or another. And the Right would say it was the leftist guerrillas who had planted the bomb during the war, and the left would say it was the right who planted the bomb. And then in fact, it turned out, Milton confirmed it in somebody's book, the Greeks had hardly taken any part at all in the original operation. That was the single operation of the entire guerrilla campaign that served any Allied purpose. It was to destroy the bridge so that the Germans could not bring reinforcements into Crete. It was a key railroad bridge. Of course the Greeks were proud of the destruction of the bridge, claiming that their respective guerillas (of the right or left depending on their persuasion) had set the charges. In fact it was the only guerrilla operation in Greece that genuinely served allied interests and no Greeks were involved. It was all Allied paratroopers, etc.,

including this guy, I guess. So he was that kind of person, not the kind of person I would have liked to see dealing with the coup, because I think he would have seen it as a good thing. He would have been sympathetic to the colonels. As to the explosion at the commemoration ceremony nearly twenty years later it was not an old explosive but I don't think the source was ever discovered

Q: Let's take this pre-coup period, while you were in Athens, and then we'll move up to Thessaloniki. While you were in Athens, what were you gathering...I know politics wasn't your beat, but obviously you were part of the Embassy and a Foreign Service Officer. How were we viewing Greek politics, we're talking about '64-'66?

SILVA: Well there was the election of '63 or '64. George Papandreou Sr., was the head of the Center Union Party. His son Andreas, had been head of the Department of Economics at Berkeley, was married to Marguerite Chant. He had been at the University of Wisconsin or Minnesota, one of those places, and there had met and married Marguerite Chant. Marguerite was, shall we say, very, very liberal. She came out of that time in the States, the late '50s early '60s. Anyway, Karamanlis was prime minister at the time, and invited Andreas back to Greece, along with half a dozen Greek Americans who were prominent at American universities, a guy from Duke, for example. He brought them all back and established the ERE, an Economic Research institution. The idea was that these brilliant American-trained Greeks would somehow come up with the salvation of the Greek economy and produce a system where Greece would become as prosperous in the world as anybody else.

Andreas was happy, I thought, he was content in that job. His daddy was then head of the Center Union and fighting Karamanlis and the Conservative Party. Andreas was a close contact of the Embassy at that time, particularly of the economic section. I had lunch with him a couple of times as part of the economic section. The people in the Embassy reveled in this contact. Here the son of the major opposition figure, American professor, renowned head of the Department, all that sort of thing. It was a great coup for the economic section

to have this man as a major contact. They saw him frequently. I didn't. They told him what a great fellow he was and that he could be, remember this was 1964, he could be the John F. Kennedy of Greece. That is exactly what he was told. I think that's when he really started thinking about going into politics. The Americans thought he had it. His father of course would love to have him go into politics. His brother, George Jr., who was said to be old George's favorite and the intended heir to his political position, had problems, mental problems. Andreas was the family hope. I don't think Andreas particularly held strong affection for his father. For one thing, the father had been married two or three times. Andreas' mother was a Polish movie star, who reportedly was not well treated by the old man. So there was some antagonism there already. The old man had been kind enough to send him to the States during the War, to avoid the draft. We heard about that enough. I think he spent all those years in the States with no intention of returning to Greece. That said something about his relationship with his father. Anyway, in the election of '63 or '64, the old man offered Andreas a rotten borough, Patras, and Andreas was elected to Parliament. Immediately, I think, he started showing his differences with the old man. The old man was a member of the “soft” left, if you like. The Center Union Party was actually a little bit to the left of center, but no where near as far left as some of the members of the Party and Andreas and as Andreas' wife would have liked. So the differences became apparent immediately.

Early on, at least in the beginning of that period, I don't think there was any hint that there would be a usurpation of power by somebody other than the political class. Although it started fairly early, around late '65, in early '66 there were rumbles. And it was the election year, remember, of '67, January '67 that really put the cat in among the pigeons. Andreas was being told then that he was going too far with his rhetoric about the military and how he was going to put them in their place. They would not stand for it. He was told that. I was in Thessaloniki at the time and went on a periodic visit to Athens. It was before the election and before the coup when things were beginning to look from my perspective as though they were going to fall apart. The Embassy didn't believe it. Nonetheless, in Thessaloniki I

had good contacts with the Third Army Corps, where it all began, so I had a better feeling for the mood of the military than did the Embassy. So I went up to the Embassy to try to convince them that things were indeed reaching a stage when something was going to happen that would not be pleasant. During the visit I had lunch with Andreas and I told him he had to be very careful, that something was going to happen and he'd be lucky to get out of it alive, because they were that determined, some of these people. He did not take me seriously, of course, I was amusing. Some ten years later he told one of his former political colleagues who is now here as a university professor, a Greek, that he remembered the warning and regretted not having paid closer attention.

Q: This was your warning, not somebody in the Embassy, just your personal...

SILVA: That's right, as far as he was concerned I was just somebody up there near the Third Army, somebody he knew vaguely.

Q: You left Athens in '66 and went to Thessaloniki. And what were you doing there?

SILVA: I was the Political Officer, Deputy Principal Officer.

Q: Who was the Consul General?

SILVA: Bill Hamilton. Not that Bill Hamilton, there were two of them. This was the Bill Hamilton who spent most of his life as a consular officer but had done some economic work. Because there were no cones in those days. He was not tainted by any particular cone. He was a nice guy, I liked Bill. Not too serious about his work. Liked to go fishing, and there was some good fishing in northern Greece. He spent a lot of time doing that. But he enjoyed the pomp of the traditional consular post. We had several doxologies during the year at the local Cathedral, and then he and I would dress in our claw hammer coats, striped pants and top hats and go to these things along with the rest of the elegantly dressed up consular corps. And Bill loved this stuff. There were all the holidays

commemorating the First World War in November. There was even one celebrating the victory on the mountain top near the border with Bulgaria.

Q: This was on the Thessaloniki front?

SILVA: Yes. All these things were striped pants affairs and Bill Hamilton enjoyed that. They were kind of nice I think myself. I hated to have to buy all those clothes. Nonetheless it was a pleasant reminder of a gentler more civil time in the old Service. Anyway, Bill was a good fellow, very supportive. I did a lot of reporting out of there that upset the hell out of the Embassy.

Q: What sort of reporting was this?

SILVA: On the politics of northern Greece. There was a bit of an argument over whether the Consulate General could or should report directly to the Department. I won that one. When it came to the election, I was within half a percentage point of what the final outcome was, and the Embassy was completely wrong. The Embassy had come out predicting the success of the Center Union Party, and...

Q: Not of George Papandreou's Party?

SILVA: His. And with the victory of the Center Union the Embassy was upset. I don't know whether they were more upset about the outcome or the fact that they had been wrong about it. Even though I had been telling them all the time, and the Department still doesn't understand this, that a post like Thessaloniki is as important to the understanding of a country—in many ways, politically more important—than the Embassy.

Q: It's the inside or outside the Beltway syndrome, as we say here in Washington.

SILVA: Exactly, well put. There you're speaking for half the population, roughly, and it's the working population that counts in democratic elections. Anyway, the Embassy never

understood that, the Department still doesn't, they keep threatening to close down that post...

Q: ...and various posts like it.

SILVA: Indeed. It's stupid.

Q: As the Political Officer, how did you go about your work?

SILVA: I went around and met people. Local government, that is. The prefect, mayors, I traveled around the district as much as I could. Fortunately it was geographically fairly compact and the roads were good. You could get to most of the area in one day and get back the same day, so it didn't cost the government more than the price of gasoline. Indeed we were always treated rather niggardly in terms of funding. (Any consular post I've served in or since inspected has the same complaint.) So we had two automobiles. One was for the CG and the other was for “general purposes.” It was a Jeep station wagon. So that was it. You couldn't take the car away very long without crippling the administrative side of the Consulate, which at the time was 15 people (American and Greek).

I went around to all these towns, called on the officials of the towns, established a relationship of some sort. I made a point of chatting with hotel people, restaurant people, store keepers, businessmen. With the military, it was fairly easy. Fairly easy at the top, I found. That is, the commanding general, Petrides, became a good friend. We had dinner all the time. He was a good friend. I knew his deputy very well. He later came to the States. That level of the military I was very close with. They told me all kinds of things that normally they would tell nobody, because they considered me a friend and a NATO ally. One great advantage, was that by the time I got to Thessaloniki, I was about a 4/4 in Greek. After a couple of years in Athens I was pretty good at it. I used to make speeches, I even talked at the university a couple of times. That's not hornblowing, it's just the way it worked out. And it was very important with the Greeks. Even if they were fluent in English, and many were, still, if you wanted rapport, it's in their language. They're flattered that

people take the time and the energy to learn what is even for them a difficult language. And if you get good enough in Greek, and I flatter myself that I was at that time. There is the Demotic Greek on the one hand and the Katharevousa on the other, and if you can use both, the Greeks are at your mercy. They just love it.

Q: The Kathervousa is the more formal language, the Demotic is the language of the streets.

SILVA: Right. Anyway, I got to know all the high ranking military. There were a couple of newspapers there, one of them very good. We had a small USIS operation, which has since gone, but through USIS I got to meet the press and learn something from them. I met the businessmen; very important up there. Not ESSO/Pappas though, I had nothing to do with them directly. They preferred to deal with the Embassy. The big business was tobacco, American tobacco, British tobacco, etc., all had headquarters in Thessaloniki for buying oriental tobacco from the whole of northern Greece and from Turkey, Thrace in particular. They were great sources of a sense of what's going on. They could feel it. Some of them had been there 30 years or more. The Light Brothers, who had their own tobacco company, had both started out with American Tobacco and then after many years had started their own little affair there. They had been there 30 years, living in northern Greece for 30 years, and had acquired considerable fortunes. In the process they had virtually become real northern Greeks. They were married to Greek women, they spoke English with a North Caroline accent, but spoke nearly flawless, unaccented Greek. They were tremendous sources.

NATO, from Land Forces South in Izmir kept an office in Thessaloniki, had two officers and a couple of enlisted men. And then in half a dozen little towns around the north we had NIKE sites.

Q: These were antiaircraft missiles.

SILVA: Yes. And these little places had from a dozen to 20 U.S. military people running the operations. So there were plenty of sources. If you wanted to get in with what was happening in northern Greece, the sources were all over. And the pretext for being in those places and not appear to be snooping, were easily come by. Take the town of Kastoria, near the Albanian border. There's a great American connection. The people of Kastoria have traditionally emigrated to Astoria, Long Island. They go from Kastoria to Astoria. Kastoria is famous, or infamous if you like, for the fur trade. There are no indigenous furs available to speak of in Greece. The Kastorians import furs from New York. The furriers of New York, putting together mink coats, etc., cut off the paws and the bellies of the mink and they bale those things up — they use only the backs to make fur coats in the States — they ship these parts in enormous bales, like cotton bales, to their relatives in Kastoria who then sew them up into large panels of sewn up little bits of fur, which are then tailored into fur coats.

The pre-coup elections were and important part of my time in Thessaloniki. The Center Union of George Papandreou had made great strides nationally and looked like it would give the conservatives of ERE real competition.

The Lambrakis Affair, long after the event, was still important in the election that I covered. It figured in the platforms of all the major parties. It was an extraordinary thing. There, it was as important to the local political scene as the murder of Martin Luther King was here. Lambrakis was a leftist member of parliament who died during a political rally in Thessaloniki. According to the conservatives he died as a result of an accident. The left claimed he was killed by the bully boys of the right. (The left may have been right in this case.) It was certainly an issue in the elections. Hardly a day went by when there wasn't something about the Lambrakis affair in the local (partisan) press.

Q: Just a quick aside, to the, some of the purely consular side. You were then in the '60s, which was a great time for young American kids to run off, head off to Turkey and other places and get involved in finding themselves and stocking up, particularly on hashish. Did

you find yourself getting Americans in jail and under arrest? Was this part of your routine there?

SILVA: Well, we had a consular officer, Jim Morton. But there wasn't a hell of a lot of that. We weren't really on that main route, you know. If there were any, I guess they had less difficulty at the Greek Turkish border than they would elsewhere. In Turkey if they were caught they went to jail. In Greece they weren't caught. We had one couple that I ran into who had bought a large stash of hashish or its equivalent in Afghanistan and had come by road all the way from there to Adrianoplis. And there they had had some trouble with the police. They weren't arrested. They were taken, questioned, etc., I suppose because they looked like 1960's hippies. The police never found the 20-kilo stash they claimed they had with them. That was the only couple I ran into, and that was because they were upset at their mistreatment by the police!

Q: You came back then in '69 to... Talbot was still the Ambassador when you left, right?

SILVA: Yes, I think so.

Q: You came back, what was it, to the Greek desk? For the layman, what did the Greek desk in those days consist of?

SILVA: Well, it was an experiment. It was the first country-directorship in the Department. NEA set up the system. It had been proposed, by lord knows whom, in one of those many Personnel studies of the Department that “country directorates” be established in lieu of the traditional “desk.” That's what they did in NEA. Previously in most cases each country was represented by a middle grade officer (perhaps with a junior assistant) under regional arrangements. A senior officer would be responsible for several countries (Greece fell into “GTI” —Greece, Turkey and Iran). It was decided that important countries would have a senior officer as director and a staff. When I went there the director was Al Vigderman, who has subsequently passed on, and had had sort of peripheral experience with Greece. He had been an economic counselor many years before. Nice guy, very bright, a lawyer

who later went on to be an Assistant Secretary at Interior, of all places. But at any rate there was Al Vigderman, there was a No. 2, who was then an 03, what would now be a 1.

Q: A 1 would be the equivalent of brigadier general, and the colonel would be the 03, or maybe even a little higher.

SILVA: Under the then current grading system a 1, was the military equivalent of something above a two star and below a three star general. And a two was above a brigadier and a three was a colonel. That was more or less what they thought. A 1 is what is today a minister-counselor, a 2 is a now a counselor. 1 now is the old 3. Anyway, the next ranking person was a three. I was a four. And assigned to be the number three in the office. Then we had two secretaries. One was the secretary to the boss and the other one read dime novels and was on the earliest version of flexi-time that I can remember. She would come in at 10 or 11 o'clock in the morning because she had to put her kids in school. What school begins that late I don't know. But then she would leave at 3 in the afternoon to pick up her kids and take them home. Theoretically she was supposed to work on Saturdays to make up the difference. And of course no secretary in NEA ever worked willingly on a Saturday. So she never turned up on Saturdays, although most of us did. It was more or less typical of the arrangement in NEA at the time. Turkish affairs, next door, was pretty much the same. Even Cyprus had its own country director at that time. The only difference in the rest of NEA was that the Arabist directories still included little groups of countries, the Gulf countries, the Arabian peninsular countries etc. all still under one director. But at any rate there was an attempt to create this system to give greater prestige to the director of a desk.

When I got back I went to see Joseph J. Sisco, who was then Assistant Secretary and for whom I came to have little respect. At any rate, he called me in to tell me that there was some question as to whether I would be assigned to the Desk, that my assignment had come about as a result of a strong recommendation from Ambassador Talbot, and from Bill Hamilton up in Thessaloniki. And that I should be flattered. There was some question

as to whether or not they could go ahead with the assignment because the head of the military junta, Col. Papadopoulos, had sent a telegram to the Secretary of State objecting to my assignment on the basis that I was a well-known anti-Greek.

Q: This was the Papadopoulos who was Prime Minister and was the leader of the colonels?

SILVA: Yeah. It was extraordinary to have a Prime Minister write about the assignment of an FSO-4! Under some circumstances I think that they would have gone along with Papadopoulos. But I think Mr. Sisco was personally offended by this guy trying to tell him how to run his operation. So he said, “The hell with it. You're going to be here, but watch your step.”

Q: A great way to start off!

SILVA: A great way to begin a career on the desk. And I spent a lot of time on the desk. It was four years, a little more than four years.

Q: You were there from '69 to '73, until you started at the War College. What was your beat on the Desk?

SILVA: There were two slots. One was the Economic Officer and one was the Political Officer. The Economic Officer was the 04 job and I was an 04, so I was assigned to the 04 job. But I did the Political work, because the number two on the desk had no reporting experience (she was the product of a Wriston program integration). I didn't have any great interest or expertise in economics. Most importantly Al Vigderman wanted me to do it.

Q: Who was the Political Officer?

SILVA: I don't remember her name. Mitchell, I think. She didn't mind the switch. Except that she minded that I was close to Al, we went to lunch together every day. She didn't like that. Though we always invited her to join us she hardly ever accepted. This was a little

early for the women's liberation movement, but I think she already had the feeling that she was running into the old-boy network or whatever. We got along, but she did not like my being there. Then I got promoted and we were of the same grade, and Al had me officially assigned into the Political Officer job. She didn't like that. She eventually left for another assignment and we got a whole series of very junior people to come in to do the number three job. They were different in that they came in through the exam (some have done very well since, others have not) but it didn't seem to make a hell of a lot of difference. The desk in all honesty was Al and me. We were the desk.

Q: This was a period of time of real intense interest and continuing historical interest, so let's talk about it.

SILVA: Well, we produced a lot of paper. That's what my job was, producing paper. Internal memoranda, enormous quantities of internal memoranda, and a series of NSSMs, the National Security Study Memoranda they were called then. They keep changing the names, but these were things that were produced in the Department for use at the National Security Council, which in turn would advise the President on policy issues. We did regular NSSMs on Greece, U.S. policy toward Greece.

The system didn't work very well. I don't think the system works even today, at least now we seem to have recognized that it doesn't work. So I suspect the Department has abdicated even further it's so-called “central role” in foreign policy. I remember one NSSM that recommended — these were highly classified at the time, I think now it's irrelevant — in which I recommended very strongly that we should cut the colonels off, that it would do us no harm if we were to abandon them, cut off military aid, be as mean to them in as many different ways as we could. That we would bring about their downfall and we could then try to rebuild our relationship with Greece. In original form it was very strong, and I thought reasonable. Who could object? This is God and Country, apple pie, or moussaka, or whatever. I thought it was as reasonable as one could expect. Of course when you do this in the Department it goes through a series of clearances, first within the Bureau,

then the front office, the Deputy Assistant Secretary, who at the time was Rodger Davies, later killed in Cyprus, and then to Joseph J. Sisco, and lord knows who else of his minions get a crack at it. And you get to argue this out again. I must admit that usually we had no problem with Rodger Davies at all, who I think was at least secretly, if not openly, of the same mind. Before it could go to NSC it had to be cleared in the Department with every bureau who could possibly have any interest and bureaus whose interest is today, to me, still cause for wonderment. What the hell did the Bureau of Consular Affairs have of interest at that time in political relations with Greece? Or AID? There was no AID program. But you had to clear it throughout the building. Then it went to an interdepartmental committee, an assistant secretary level group it was supposed to be, although they never were consistently at that level. Which meant it had to be cleared by the Agency, by the Pentagon, USIA, Treasury, etc.. It had to get cleared, all over town. The Department of Labor would get into the act because they had their man in the Department. If they found out that there was a paper circulating on a subject like Greece, they wanted to get into the Act. Well, it would mean that you've produced something and a month later you're just beginning to get responses from the various agencies and they all expect their views to be respected. And they're all very specifically interested in certain things; they want this changed, they want that changed. So you fight these things out. If you can get the Assistant Secretary to back you up, which usually is difficult because he has his own agenda, you might be able to fight off most of the objections. But you usually don't. And you have to water this thing down. What's grossly dumb about this system is that all of these agencies are represented on the National Security Council. But they get a crack at the paper before it goes to the Council. It's already watered down; it may come to the same conclusion but the method of getting there is different. Some of the arguments have been struck out because they offend an interest at the Pentagon, or the CIA or whatever, and the recommendation is weakened. Instead of “you must,” it will say “it would be nice if...” Then it goes to the NSC where these people are again present and get another crack. So the Department, which is supposed to take the lead in foreign affairs, becomes only a peripheral part of the foreign affairs process. You start the ball rolling but somebody else

plays the game. And inevitably that's the way the NSC operates and today, it's obvious, they're running things. And the Department accepts it.

Anyway, that's a lot of what we did. Paper, paper, paper. We answered the complaints of Congress. We had, of course, a very strong lobby on the hill opposed to U.S. policy because U.S. policy was seen as pro-colonel and supportive of the regime.

Q: Where was this lobby coming from?

SILVA: Don Edwards of California was number one when I think of that group.

Q: From the liberal, Democratic side, more or less?

SILVA: Indeed. And there were some very vocal Greeks in town who were genuinely exiled from their country. In many cases it was completely phony, a useful way to attract attention. Most of them were members of the academic community, or as in one case one who claimed to be a newspaperman. He had never worked for the press however.

Q: Was that the guy...

SILVA: Probably.

Q: Yes, Demetrakopoulos. I remember he was just an awful pain in the ass because he really was a pretty odious character in his own right.

SILVA: Absolutely. He was living in a hotel owned by Louise Gore. He was living there free. He was her good friend apparently. But he was also friendly with the people on the Hill and they used him for their own purposes, and of course he used them for his. He became an insidious pest. We had all kinds of evidence of his nefarious undertakings before and after the coup. He was a con man; we could prove it, we had all kinds of documentation. But we were never permitted to use it, mostly simply because the Congress would not have accepted it. We knew that people on the Edwards side of the

House would have accused us, and they did accuse us of trying to “get” him, and we did, no doubt that we did. I even had one little internal memo that I sent to Joe Sisco about how we could go about getting the SOB. Somehow he got a copy and there were threats of lawsuits and all that sort of thing. And of course people on the Hill said “That proves what the Department is up to. They're persecuting this poor man —” Another example of the strange workings of the Department at the time is interesting. Butts Macomber was what was then the equivalent of an assistant Secretary in management.

Q: Management. This was William Macomber, known as Butts Macomber.

SILVA: Yeah. I was called by Mr. Macomber one day, late, six or seven o'clock in the evening, to come up to his office immediately. I went to his office—this is typical of the kind of atmosphere we worked in— and he shouted “What the hell have you been doing down there? I've got this great American, an important person who sends you a telegram to complain about U.S. policy and you don't have the courtesy to answer him.” I said truthfully, “I don't know what the hell you're talking about.” It seems that the then chairman of the board of American Express (name escapes me) had sent a telegram from Florida addressed to the Secretary of State and it indeed complained about U.S. policy towards Greece and how we were somehow pampering those beastly colonels. He called Macomber to complain that he had not had a reply. It turned out the telegram had no return address and was signed simply “Jim.” I asked Macomber “How do you think I'm going to answer this thing? I don't know who Jim is! I don't know where he's from. There's no address! It's a telegram from Miami, Florida, addressed to the Department of State.” So he said, “Well, you should have checked into this.” I reminded him of how many telegrams we were getting, how many letters we had in the file. We answered all that we could but couldn't answer a letter from a guy who didn't give you his address or his full name. But Macomber was pissed off and he went on and on about how lax we were and that's why NEA was in trouble because we didn't know what the hell we were doing. “We're not playing to our constituency out there,” that kind of nonsense. Years later he still

remembered this, and years later he reminded me of this one tremendous fault he had found with the Greek desk. It was that kind of atmosphere we worked in.

Q: How about the other side, the Greek-American congressmen who were... You know I was told when I was getting ready, I was Consul General in Athens at the time, said, "You know you think you've got a Jewish lobby, but the Greek-Americans are everywhere" and they're really well within the establishment. They're presidents of Chambers of Commerce and a lot of Congressmen and Senators. How were they lining up in this?

SILVA: Well the politicians were very, very careful. They tried to stay out of it. You got very little from these people, people like Sarbanes, Brademas, very little. They were opposed to the colonels but gently, because the average Greek-American was a conservative and thought the situation in Greece was okay.

Q: Being, as first generation American immigrants are, quite conservative.

SILVA: Conservative indeed, but also they didn't like the king. Most of the Greek American community were village people, small businessmen and conservative. To them the king was a foreigner, his mother was a foreigner. They had abandoned the country. And to most them Andreas Papandreou was a phoney intellectual, a leftist. It was that attitude that permeated the community's position. It was interesting, I forget which year it was that I was invited to Philadelphia, one of those precious moments on the Greek desk. Greek Independence day is March 25 if I remember correctly, and I was invited to Philadelphia to speak to the Greek community. It sounded like a pleasant respite and I agreed. I talked to the organizer on the phone and asked what subject they wanted me to talk about. Well, the guy seemed thrilled and said: "It's too bad you can't give the speech in Greek!" I said, "Sure I'll give it in Greek, why not?" He thought that was wonderful. But don't talk about the colonels. Don't talk about the colonels. Talk about anything else, Greek history, Greek-American relations, etc. but we don't want to hear about those colonels. We hear about it too much. So that's what I did. I went up there and I gave this speech in my best

Katharevousa (the formal parliamentary Greek) about Greek-American relations over history, America's philosophical debt to Greece and our architectural debt to Greece so evident in the Capitol. I thought it was a good speech. The big thing was that I did this in front of the Liberty Bell on the steps of Independence Hall. It was interesting that the Greeks occupied a status in Philadelphia that permitted them to take over the entire square in front of the Hall, and it was all Greek, as far as the eye could see were Greeks celebrating their independence day. Afterwards we had a reception and I was able to talk to many of them. They seemed genuinely impressed. Typically, it was oh, what a wonderful speech! Too bad I don't speak Greek!

Q: Or if you spoke Greek, Katharevousa was not the Greek they would understand.

SILVA: That's right. None of them understood what I was saying, I don't think any of them. They were just thrilled to hear those dulcet tones of the Greek language. That's what it was to them, they were so thrilled. They wanted to have copies made, so we had copies made and translated into English for them, so that they could see it. And it was published in the Greek-language newspaper in Philadelphia, of all places. They were an extraordinary group of people.

Q: Tell me, on this thing, I mean this was a highly controversial thing. You had a Nixon administration with a Henry Kissinger at the time playing the role of a very pragmatic, anti-communist, this was not an Administration that would have been very sympathetic to the democratic side. It was very sort of realpolitik. And a very strong sort of academic world that just detested the colonels. And of course Greece brought it together because democracy is a Greek word. How did you find the role of both Sisco and Kissinger on this Greek policy?

SILVA: Mr. Kissinger was Mr. Realpolitik. That's it. Balance of power, we've got to support the Greeks, we've got to support the Turks, because that's what holds the southern flank together. That sort of thing. It was all sort of intellectual, very nice, but not very real world.

Sisco, on the other hand, well, I'll give you an example of the real world and the real Department world, at least then. The Navy came up with a notion of home-porting in Greece.

Q: Oh, Jesus, yes, I know. Admiral Zumwalt and company.

SILVA: They decided they wanted to home-port in Greece. The Desk fought it off.

Q: The Embassy too was adamant about it too at the time.

SILVA: We fought it off at the Desk, tooth and toenail, for about a year. I don't think the Embassy was ever aware of how long this took. This really took a long time. We were able to fight it off because there was so much opposition to the colonels all over the press, the Congress, etc., that people in the Department were very goosey about it and they kept putting Zumwalt off. Finally we did a couple of NSSMs, National Security Study Memoranda, about home porting. The first one went nowhere. William Rogers was Secretary of State then. Remember Bill Rogers? He was very forgettable. Yes. Anyway, it never went anywhere because the NSC never got around to it because Rogers wouldn't go to the meetings. He would send his number two, who was that lawyer from California, I forget his name, and he didn't understand the issues and wouldn't bring it up, etc. etc. So the first one never went anywhere. The second one, which the Desk promulgated, there was no request, you're supposed to get a request from the NSC to produce a NSSM. You get a document, I forget what it's called. But we started it anyway, and it was to kill off this notion of home porting in Pyraeus. Everybody bought off on it in the Department, surprisingly enough. When it got to the Navy they didn't like it because they were determined to home port. After almost a year of fighting this off, suddenly I was called in — by this time I was acting country director— I was called in by Sisco and he said, “We're going to go home port in Greece.” I said, “How come?” “Well, we've thought about this a long time. We've decided to go ahead.” Well, I later was told that Mr. Sisco had gone to play golf with Admiral Zumwalt at the Burning Tree Country Club and that

was enough. I guess the idea is that some people can be bought with a free lunch, some people can be bought by a day with the high and mighty at the Burning Tree Country Club. It seems that it was as simple as that. Now the Congress was upset and called home porting hearings. At the hearings one of that Edwards group, I forget who it was, said he wanted to see the studies we had made as to why home porting was necessary and how we reached the conclusion that Pyraeus was the best place in the Mediterranean for home porting the Sixth Fleet. Everybody, he noted, missed the point that the Sixth Fleet was established on the basis that it would be an independent force without land support. (That had been one of our arguments in the second ill-fated NSSM). That was the basis for its initial creation.

Well of course there had been no study, had never been a study of ports in the Mediterranean where you could home port most conveniently. The Navy had simply decided on Pyraeus because they thought the colonels would be supportive.

Q: I think at this point you'd better explain what home porting meant in this context.

SILVA: It would mean having shore facilities for the Sixth Fleet, which would mean housing for dependents, recreation facilities, commissaries, the works, the whole support mechanism.

Q: I think it was a carrier group, which meant a carrier and its ancillary things, the idea being it took so much time to move ships back and forth, we did have home porting in Japan. And the Navy was having recruiting problems at the time, and this would mean the husbands would not be away from their wives so long.

SILVA: That was the argument that the Navy was using for home porting in Greece. They insisted, during the testimony, that they had in fact checked all the ports in the Mediterranean that were feasible and decided the only one they could go to was Pyraeus.

Well, that sounded to the Committee as though we had made a study. So they came back and asked to see a copy of the study. Well, there was no study.

I guess Zumwalt and Sisco got together and decided to do a study and date it back a little bit. And that's exactly what they did. They sent two guys out there, both of them I know very well, and they went to southern France and Spain, North Africa, Israel, all over, they went to Turkey and Greece, all over the place. They were gone about three days, they came back and wrote a report on all the disadvantages of every place except Pyraeus. And they gave it to the Congress. I don't think the Congress bought it for a minute. But rather than create a real hassle, they simply accepted this report without raising the issue of its counterfeit nature. The Navy went ahead and started home porting, but it didn't last because the Greeks didn't want them.

Q: As I said, I was part of the country team, Consul General in Athens, at the time and we were adamant. We were practically on the dock waving them away, because we knew 1) we had a volatile political situation. Pyraeus was the heart of the left and putting a bunch of Americans there was just going to exacerbate everything. Plus the fact that our observers were saying if you put a carrier group in there, all of a sudden how can you use it, because Libya was one of the places we might like to use it against, a very obvious place we might want to use it against, and the Greeks were quite supportive of Libya and might say, no you can't use that group, you know, it would seem to be a kind of hostage situation. It didn't make sense either on the immediate or strategic point of view.

What were you getting from the Foreign Service establishment as far as dealing with Greek affairs?

SILVA: Well, I had the feeling when we had these meetings inside the Department, Bureau-level meetings, that we were looked upon with some embarrassment. You know, this crumby little country is creating all this for us, these people, these Greek affairs people, they're attracting the attention of the Congress and the Congress and the press

are on the Department all the time and it's your fault. There was some of that. It was extraordinary, absolutely extraordinary.

Q: Of course you were in NEA, and NEA was basically Arab-Israeli affairs, oil and all that, so you didn't belong. Later, they hadn't quite moved you over to Europe, had they at that time? But almost. And Europe didn't like, I mean nobody wanted this because these were just quarreling people. It's like having the Capulets and the Montagues in your bailiwick? Anyway, did Sisco, basically did you have the feeling he was focusing much on this or was this something that would come up every once and a while on the radar and go down again?

SILVA: Yeah, I think that was it. He found it irksome. It was detracting from what was really important, which were the oil countries. And his contacts outside the Department, when they were with the Saudis, gave him a sense of self-importance, whereas with the Greeks, what the hell, who cares. This was detracting from the time he could spend with the great and near-great of the oil industry.

Q: What was your impression of our Embassy, and particularly Henry Tasca, during this basically '70 to '73 period.

SILVA: I thought Henry Tasca was a disaster, an absolute disaster. His wife would have made a better ambassador, I thought. She at least had the guts to call the colonels what they were, and I heard that one time she did so to their face. Even though she came from a good fascist background herself.

Q: Oh yeah, her father was known as the garbage collector of Mussolini. I gather he had the garbage concession in Rome. But anyway, what were you getting out of Athens in the way of political reports?

SILVA: Oh, not much. We got the feeling that there was a lot of dissension within the Embassy. That Henry Tasca was trying, I think honestly, to play both ends. He was trying

to support the colonels in order to keep things on an even keel and at the same time make occasional squeaks of displeasure for the sake of the Congress and those in the Department who didn't feel as he did. It didn't work, of course. He was generally reviled in the Department. Even Joe Sisco thought very little of him. It was too bad. He was the wrong guy for the job, obviously. But being unwilling to really go on record with anybody as believing the colonels to be an evil in themselves and something to be rid of, I think he helped perpetuate the colonels reign longer than it should have lasted. As we were thinking already in the Department, when I left the desk in '73, we'd already been thinking for a year or so that the colonels were not long for this world, that they were about to come to an end. As a matter of fact on my trip in 1973 to Athens, I met with all kinds of people I shouldn't have, according to the Agency. One was Virginia Tsouderos, a great lady, now a member of Parliament, but then seen as one of the enemy by the Agency because she was opposed to the colonels and there was a little coterie built around her of people of similar thought. I had known her, I went to see her and her group and we had long discussions, and the agency followed me around and the next day I was summoned to their offices in Athens and questioned on my “clandestine” visit to Virginia. But what's a clandestine visit? I took a taxi! Anyway, when I went back and Joe Sisco summoned me and said: “Now tell me what you learned on this trip.” I said: “Wouldn't you rather have me think about this and write down my thoughts and come to some kind of conclusion?” And he said: “No, no, no, no. What's the matter with you? Tell me what you think?” I just got off the plane. And I told him then, this was 1973, that if I had to reach an immediate conclusion, “The colonels have at most a year and then they're out!” He said: How the hell is that going to happen?” , and I said: “I don't know. It could be anything. Probably Cyprus.” I wrote that down for him at the time and he said it was all nonsense, the colonels were there and it didn't make any difference, just so they're there long enough to serve our interests. That was his attitude. “A year,” he said, “a year's a long time.” It's too bad.

Q: How about, were you aware of whatever reporting was coming out of the CIA?

SILVA: Some of it, we got some of it regularly and occasionally we got something important. But there was damn little that was of any interest.

Q: What were you getting out of this? Did it have a point of view?

SILVA: No, I don't think you could characterize it all that way. It was pretty pedestrian stuff, what they grind out anywhere. Who struck John today? That sort of thing. Nothing of an analytical sense, like this is where we're going and this is where we'd like to go. You didn't get that.

Q: How about Cyprus? What sort of role was Cyprus playing when you were there. It later blew up on July 14, or whatever it was, in 1974, but we're talking about what led up to it while you were on the desk.

SILVA: Well I think it was important. There was a lot going on. We had what's his name, Grivas, fooling around in the hills there pulling off one thing and another. It was a constant, I won't say an irritant, to us, because it was useful in distracting people from what was going on in the Department of State vis-a-vis Greece. Something else that was happening on the island that was in its own way as outrageous. The Cyprus Desk was a strange affair at the time. How much they were involved in that whole thing I don't know. I really don't know. The Country Officer had been Joe Sisco's dog-robber and sort of special assistant junior officer, then promoted by Joseph and then given the Desk.

Q: Who was this?

SILVA: Tom Boyatt. He was given the Desk at two grades above his own and I always had the feeling he was more concerned about the career development of Tom Boyatt than of anything else. I'm not sure about the extent to which the Desk was playing any real role in either analyzing the situation or predicting outcomes or recommending courses of action. I don't know. We were on the periphery. We could only observe. The one thing Cyprus did was awaken interest in the Orthodox Church and Makarios' little adventures.

Archbishop Iacovos was then Greek Archbishop in the States. Handsome guy. Anyway, he was the Greek Archbishop in the States and very, very politically active as one would expect him to be. And he was involved on both the issue of Greece and what was going on in Cyprus. He was lobbying all the time. So Rodger Davies, actually, asked me to write him something on the Greek Orthodox Church and explain its history and its position in the Middle East. I ended up writing a sort of small book. How can you do less on the Greek Orthodox Church? You know, 100 pages or so, and sent it up to him, bound. I think he read it, Rodger would. And from him it went to Joe Sisco, who said he had read it. If nothing else, it helped them to understand the Archbishop and how to treat with him.

I don't mean that he was treated in any way that might be considered offensive, but sometimes we had been a bit too deferential to the Archbishop and at other times we may have been a bit too offhand. I think the paper helped bring some balance on the issue to our front office on the role of the Church in Greece and the role of the Church for Greek Americans, how the Church was viewed in Cyprus and, most importantly I think to them, was how it was seen in the then-Soviet Union.

Q: Well, did the Church weigh in much while you were on the desk? Where was it coming down?

SILVA: It weighed indirectly, because the Archbishop would come to see Sisco, he would go to the Congress, he would go to the White House, he would go to see the Secretary of State. It was a constant presence.

Q: Was he on the side of the colonels, this guy?

SILVA: No, no. He was on the side of Greece, you know, we've got to do something. I think he wanted to see the colonels dumped, but not because he was particularly opposed to the colonels, per se, or their point of view. The Archbishop, I think, saw himself as a man of the twentieth century, though leading a medieval institution. He saw himself as a spokesman for the Greek American community which generally approved of what was

going on in Greece. At the same time most educated Greek Americans found the colonels an embarrassment.

Q: Certainly, Greece stunk, particularly in the media and in intellectual circles.

SILVA: A strong anti-colonel group developed here in Washington at the time. I don't think it could happen in another country, but the group came to be known outside the Department and inside as the Greek Mafia. The core of “the Greek Mafia” was made up of Jim Pyros, who was the administrative assistant to Congressman Nedzi; a fellow named Hackett, who was a member of the staff of the House Foreign Affairs committee; Professor Theodore Couloumbis, who was a professor of international relations at American University; Prof. Nick Stavrou, who was a professor of political science at Howard University. I could go on, in plenum there were about 20. There was even a member of the Greek Embassy, John Nikolopoulos, who was the press attach#. Even though the Embassy was staffed by the Junta, this guy was a member of the group! And I was a kind of occasional member of the group. That is, to the extent that I was able, I became a kind of ex-officio member of their group, their mafia. These people met not on a schedule, but at least twice a month, three times a month, sometimes once a week. They would get together someplace, in a restaurant, to debate Greece. It was fantastic for me. I had access in one place to this enormous group of people. All of them had very strong feelings and most of them knew something about what was going on in Greece. They had contacts back with their family members.

Q: In many ways it was not that repressive of a regime. People were back and forth, there wasn't the midnight knock on the door, that sort of thing.

SILVA: That's what made it more difficult to deal with. It was not very overtly repressive. But it was intellectually reprehensible to the group. That this should be happening in their country, the cradle of democracy, was unacceptable. And especially these college

professors, good lord, it was an offense to their dignity to have their country run by these colonels.

Q: And of course they were lower class, too.

SILVA: Oh yes. The father of one of the college professors had been a colonel in the Greek Army and been killed during the Greek civil war, the great post Second World War rebellion, and he always made it clear that his grandfather had been a university professor too. They weren't ignorant peasants like the colonels who had taken power in Greece. It was a fascinating group. They have pretty much dispersed since then, some have even gone back to Greece. But I still see some of them occasionally. They were great. I remember gems like “Well, you know, these colonels, you know all about them when you see their wives, because members of the military forces in Greece who are out of the academy, of course that's the only way to be an officer, to go to the academy; they come out of the academy, they're peasant boys, they come from the villages. The first assignment is always to some remote village someplace in Greece and they get there and they meet one of the local girls who is just like they are, peasants, and they marry them. Then over the years they get promoted, promoted, and promoted, and they're still married to that fat peasant girl that they married in their youth. And you can always tell them when you go to a reception at the Pentagon, you can tell them by their wives. Now, the wives of those officers who come from good families, those wives were selected by the family. They married back home, not in the village someplace.” The group's analysis of the Greek colonels sometimes reached into that kind of socio-anthropological arcana. It was analysis, whatever its value, that you could get no where else.

Q: Politics and society of course are the great game, much more fun than sex or the movies. Well, were there any connections with the NSC, not just the Kissinger and Sisco connection, but did you have any of that?

SILVA: We used to get calls from them from time to time. They were not supposed to contact the desk directly but they did. And I think I went over there once in four years.

Q: Did you have a Greek man or woman over at the NSC, somebody who handled that sort of thing?

SILVA: No, the NSC was not as big then as it is now, you know.

Q: We really are talking about, although the Greeks would never, it was very peripheral to things, just an irritant, wasn't it?

SILVA: I think it was seen that way in the upper reaches of our government. An important irritant if it somehow, if we made the kind of misstep that would lead to Greece leaving NATO. That was seen as a great problem by some of the Department's leadership, but most thought it most unlikely. Generally people was convinced that no matter how badly you treated the Greeks they would always stay in NATO. In their own interest.

Q: You may need to balance off Turkey, if they left NATO, I suppose it was pretty clear that we would say, Gee, we're sorry and then move all our assets and support over to Turkey.

SILVA: They're still talking, I reviewed a book last year of a collection of papers on the future of Greece generally, particularly on Greece and the Common Market. Among these Greek authors there is repeated suggestion that Greece can't go it alone because the Turks will move in and we can't trust the United States. I mean there were 18 or 19 authors of this book and just about every one of them mentioned the Turkish thing directly or indirectly. One way or another they say you can't trust the United States because after all, the United States is looking after its own interests. What a surprise!

Q: Unlike the international-minded Greeks! Alright, well why don't we leave it at this point and pick up next time when you go to the War College and Rome and on.

Okay, today is Jan. 30, 1995. Walt we've now reached the point where you went to the War College, from '73-'74. Vietnam was winding down, what was your impression of how the military was looking at Vietnam at the War College level.

SILVA: It was an interesting time to be there, I think, because I suspect it was the class that had the most former prisoners of war among the students of any in that whole period. There were probably a dozen or more who had been in prison camps, including Johnny McCain, who is now Senator McCain.

Q: I suppose the theory being that you didn't want to put the men under undue strain, but you wanted to bring them back and this was a good way to do it.

SILVA: Ease them back, etc. I think that was the idea. They made some concessions. Johnny McCain was a little under rank to go to the War College, but nonetheless they gave him that year, and I think he needed it. He was all busted up from his escapades in Vietnam. He broke both arms, broke his legs, and then did not get well treated in prison. Anyway, the presence of these ex-POWs made it particularly interesting. Nonetheless you would think that in that kind of atmosphere there would be a certain amount of anti-war feeling. There was. There was some of that. But most of it was, including among the POWs, that they had done the right thing and that the US had tried to do the right thing and it didn't work out very well. That was the attitude. Some of it of course was rationalizing their own condition. What are you doing to do? Naturally the fault was most frequently laid at the feet of the civilian leadership. But I was surprised by the number of them who were not exactly pacifists, mind you, but less aggressive than the civilians. When we had war games during that year, we had three or four during the year, it was usually the civilians who would end up by “nuking” them. And it was usually the military who would try a more sensible, less drastic approach to the problem, less violent. The guy who was sort of the “child” of the class, Johnny McCain—he and I were on a team during one of these war games—and I'm happy to say that I joined with him in opposing the use of nuclear weapons at the end of this thing. Everybody else on the team, including

somebody from the agency, somebody from USIA, and the military were all going to go out there and blast the opponents “into the Stone Age”. That made the year very interesting. It was also a year when we had people like Kissinger come to talk to the class, Irving Kristol, and you name them, a great number of movers and shakers. I suspect because the Commandant, General somebody or other, had connections and was able to get these people to come. It was a useful year. It was a useful year probably mostly because it got me out of the Greek desk! By then I had been almost 10 consecutive years with the Greeks. Too much. A couple of interesting things did happen. I went with the War College on its Far Eastern trip. They take three or four trips a year, at the very end of the year members of the class go pretty much where they want to go. And my group went to the Far East, and of course the war was still going on. We ended up in Thailand, and did the usual things. You go to the Thai War College and listen to them, and you go to the Embassy and listen to the Embassy, etc. And, in the middle of all this I got a phone call from Phnom Penh. I had an old friend serving there as DCM, Bob Keeley. The Ambassador was John Gunther Dean. And Keeley wanted to know if I wouldn't like to be assigned to Phnom Penh. I said no, that my assignment to the war college still had some time to go. He said the Ambassador could break the assignment. And then, the Ambassador came on the phone. I never met the man in my life, I didn't know who the hell he was. And he said: “We'd like you to come up here and work with us. There's great opportunity, times are marvelous up here, etc.” And I said “No thank you. Besides, how do I get from Bangkok to Phnom Penh in the middle of a war.” And he says: “That's not a problem. I'll send an F-4 to pick you up.”

Q: An F-4 being a fighter.

SILVA: Yeah. That cinched it — I didn't want to work for any ambassador who could call up F-4s. That ended it, thank goodness, though in career terms it might have been a good move. But then when we got back, this was early summer of 1974, the Turkish invasion of Cyprus took place.

Q: This was around July 14th, I think. I left Greece on the first of July and it happened just after I got out of there.

SILVA: Well, I had not graduated, I still had three or four weeks to go, if I recall. I was notified that I was being pulled out to work on the Cyprus Task Force with a fellow named Kontos. It turned out that the deal was Kontos had the day shift and I was the director of the night shift. So we hardly ever met. And I spent three, four, five weeks there, whatever it was, it seemed interminable. I worked nights, which was terrible because Butts Macomber was in Ankara as Ambassador at the time, and his phone calls usually came during the night shift, my time.

Q: Your friend.

SILVA: He was in a constant state of outrage. Now, you remember after the initial invasion the Turks were slowed down, indeed stopped because the logistic problem couldn't be solved as easily as they thought it would be. They couldn't get enough in men and supplies across those narrow straights to supply the troops that were already over there. So they stalled for about a week or so, I don't remember exactly how long. Now, our Secretary of State at the time was one Henry Kissinger, and he was doing his usual shuttle diplomacy, running around solving the world's problems singlehandedly. I never saw him during this entire time, never saw him, because the task force was under the aegis of the EUR Bureau, so we dealt with the Secretary through the Assistant Secretary of the Bureau. At any rate, at one point it seemed to me that we could have cut off the invasion. Not reversed it, but stopped it and kept it from growing. So I did a memo. I don't think it ever went anywhere. But I did the memo and passed it on, and the suggestion was simple. Since Turkish policy was being handled, it seemed, entirely by the military, and the invasion and everything to do with the invasion was certainly the business of the military in Turkey, if they chose to stop they would stop. If they chose to go on they would go on, regardless of what the civilian government said it wanted to do. And I thought there was only one way. We had to convince the military that it was not in their interest to continue

the invasion. The suggestion was that we send the one man who I thought could talk to them and get them to go along with this and that was the then Commander of NATO, General Andy Goodpaster. He had a great relationship with those people—he had great relations with every chief of staff at NATO. And he could have, I think, convinced them that further encroachments would be unnecessary. They had made the point, they had landed troops. The troops were in Cyprus. We were not suggesting that they take them out. We would simply suggest that it was time to stop further movements and start talking. I think most of the people on the Task Force agreed that that would be worth trying. Not a guaranteed success, but worth trying. I don't think it ever got out of the Bureau, much less to Brother Kissinger. If it did, it would not have sold, I don't think, because it would have suggested that there was somebody else in the world who could handle one of our little problems. So you know what happened. The Turks continued to pour into Cyprus and eventually took over a large part of the island.

Q: You had been away a year. When had the Greek Desk move over to EUR?

SILVA: It was during that time, that year, early '74.

Q: What was your feeling about how EUR was handling this problem?

SILVA: It wasn't. The Secretary was handling it. They were a conduit, the soldiers who did what the Secretary wanted. They had very little input at all. In fact the Task Force had no input at all. Getting all the stuff into one central point for what purpose? I could never figure out what the hell was the purpose of this Task Force since it got all the information, all the reports and telegrams came there, the Agency reports, DIA reports, everything came there and that's it! You did a kind of daily report that went out, a telegram, of the activities that went on during the day, and that's it. To me it was a waste of time and money to operate that Task Force. As it usually is.

Q: It gives the appearance of doing something. We're on top it, we have a task Force. But was there the general feeling of the people there who were immersed in the problem on

the Task Force that Henry Kissinger had taken it all upon himself, and also that he wasn't very good at what he was doing? Or not?

SILVA: I think there was a general feeling, except among the very youngest members, that we were not doing anything very useful. The large number of young officers (including some out of the FS-100 class at FSI) who had been seconded to the task force thought it was all very thrilling, to be that close to the problem. And by then, there was the image of Secretary Kissinger as the Lone Ranger, out there, without a mask, righting wrongs. Many saw him the way the press was handling him. You know, the press was always tongue-in-cheeking Henry Kissinger as the guy who's out there, superman, the shuttle diplomatist and all that sort of thing. And I think that affected people in the Department, certainly, who began to see him the same way. No use talking to him because he knows what he is going to do anyway.

Q: Did you get any impression about something that has turned into a sort of cottage industry, and that is Tom Boyatt as a rather junior officer on the Cyprus Desk going up against Kissinger, and did that all reflect on what you were doing at the time?

SILVA: Well, at the time I vaguely remember that whole situation. I don't remember so much going against... Tom was a bright young officer, he had a special relationship with Joseph Sisco, having been his special assistant or something before that, and been given the Cyprus Desk. But I never had the impression that as the Cyprus Desk officer he had a great deal of interest in Cyprus. I think it was mostly an interest in advancing. There was a junior officer assigned with him who was outstanding, and who, I forget his name, who later contracted one of those terrible diseases, those nervous disorders, while he was assigned to Cyprus..Anyway, he did the work. The rest of it was a lot of “showboating”.

Q: Did you get the feeling that there was a lot of posturing going on then?

SILVA: Oh, absolutely. It was posture and nothing behind it. It was such a small problem. There was a great deal of searching in the Department to find out what possible interest

we had in whether Cyprus was divided between Greece and Turkey, whether it was united with Greece under the “enosis” plan or whether it all went with Turkey. In any of those scenarios Cyprus would be part of NATO and become a NATO stronghold, the head of the spear aimed at the heart of the Middle East sort of thing. I don't recall any strong feelings among those who had served in Greece, served in Cyprus or served in Turkey. They usually took the positions of their former hosts. There was some of that clientitis thing. But other than that it was hard to get anybody above the Desk level really excited. They were excited by the possibility that we could use Cyprus, that would be the thing. It would have been nice.

Q: Use Cyprus how?

SILVA: As a military forward base. That would have been very nice, you see, if we could replace the British there and have naval and air forces that close to our interests in the Middle East. But it didn't turn out that way. Independent Cyprus was not about to become a forward base for the Sixth Fleet.

Q: I have to reflect my own feeling. Having served in Greece myself, I did not develop a great affection for Greek politics. Was there any feeling that the Cyprus problem sort of solved itself.

SILVA: The Cypriots don't think that.

Q: Oh, I know. I went to a Cypriot meeting not long ago, and they talk about 25 years of tyranny. But from what I gather the Greeks weren't really very nice to the Turkish minority.

SILVA: Of course it was when the coup took place in Cyprus, maneuvered theoretically by the colonels in Athens, and the fear, very legitimate fear, I think, of Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots especially, that with the Greek Army involved in the coup in Cyprus that you'd end up with an invasion from Greece, and their own position would be substantially weakened. They'd be run out of the country. And that's why the Turks invaded. It's clear, I think it's

all very logical, and why we thought it was strange I don't know. Of course it brought about the downfall of the colonels in Athens, which was a bit of pleasant serendipity, but nonetheless it left Cyprus with the problem unresolved, with the Turks in control of large areas of the country and a lot of dispossessed Greek Cypriots wanting to go home.

Q: But in a way it sort of solved the problem. Well, anyway, you left there in the end of the summer of '74, and what happened then?

SILVA: Well, I got a couple of calls. A couple of people were going off to Embassies who wanted to know if I was interested in being a DCM to them. Both of these were old acquaintances from NEA who had been around the corner for a long time and they thought I might want to be a DCM. I think one of them was going to the Sudan, and that was not what I had in mind. Mary was just getting over an illness and that was not the right place for someone who needed access to medical care. So I turned him down. The other guy was going somewhere in the Middle East. He didn't want to see me. He said his wife wanted to interview my wife. And I said “No thank you.” I didn't approve of that when it was legal, and it was no longer the way things were done in the Foreign Service. So I turned them both down. I forget who was the DG at that time...I think it was Harry Barnes. Anyway, he wanted to know if I would like to go to Rome. I thought that would be a very nice idea! So I asked him what I would be doing in Rome. He said there was only one job, and that was to be Counselor for Political-Military Affairs. I said okay, that sounded great, so we went to Rome.

Q: Where you served from '74-'78.

SILVA: Yes, I did a full four years. It was very nice. We lived very well, it was a great job, there were a lot of exciting things going on. The DCM, Bob Beaudry was absolutely first rate. He ran the Embassy. Something of a martinet, his attitude was, you have your job, you do your job, Goddammit, and you don't come crying to me if you can't get it done. I thought he had a great attitude. Anyway, he thought that the Political section, which was

geographically the neighbor to the Political-Military section, was not organized quite the way it ought to be. So he broke it up and we ended up with two Political sections, one was political-internal affairs and the other became political-multilateral affairs, everything outside the country that had to do with the Italians. I became Counselor for Political-Multilateral Affairs, which I thought was rather amusing since I didn't have to change the initials on my towels, you see. And the other one became Political-Intelligence As a result I got one more staff person, which gave me two assistants and a secretary. We did the UN and all that stuff, Council of Europe, CSCE. As it turned out it was a big job. It seemed most of the mail that came into that Embassy had to do with international organizations rather than Italian domestic affairs. Just the CSCE produced three or four messages a day. The mail we got every day was unbelievable. But anyway, it was fun. Kathy Shirley worked for me then.

Q: her husband Jock was...

SILVA: He was then the PAO, Public Affairs Officer. Steve May was the other officer in the section (now dead, unfortunately). We realigned the work of the two sections. I thought it upset the Political Internal Affairs officer.

Q: Who was that?

SILVA: Ford, Alan Ford. I think it upset the hell out of him to lose some of his area of interest, and mostly because in this fallout the multilateral affairs section got the Foreign Ministry, since it had to do with the relations of Italy with other countries. In fact I handed it over to Kathy Shirley, who, by the way, did a first-rate job dealing with those people. But that upset the hell out of the Political Intelligence Officer because it took away access to the people that he had been cultivating for years. He was married to an Italian woman and had friends in the Italian Foreign Ministry. Her father had been an Italian embassy staff member in East Africa. So he had a proprietary interest in the Foreign Ministry. After I left they went back to the old organization. But at the time, in my half of the political work of

it really was in NATO. At that time, the Italian Communist Party was still very powerful, especially in the north. And there were areas where we were having serious difficulties. Up in Livorno, for example, we had a depot for weapons of various kinds, ammunition, etc., Camp Darby. It was one of those places where we never confirmed nor denied the presence of nuclear weapons. It was one of those places where we had to resort to that tap dance. Camp Darby was basically where they stockpiled a lot of the heavy munitions for the Sixth Fleet and also for the forward units we had variously placed. It turned out they needed greater capacity and wanted to add more bunkers. The camp was very large, the depot of dispersed bunkers occupied only small spaces with the bunkers dispersed over great areas. Inside the fence was a reservation, that is ecologically probably the last pristine place in Italy. It's unbelievable. They've been there so long that it looks like a virgin, beautiful forest. Occasionally you see a little hump in the ground and know that underneath is a bunker full of deadly stuff. But also it is the only place in Italy where the European roe deer thrives. They had, it seems to me, a herd of 350 or so. They roamed this camp unhindered, and of course you couldn't do any shooting in there. Occasionally poachers tried to come in over the fence but as a rule that little herd thrived and multiplied. Periodically the Italian equivalent of the Fish and Wildlife Service, whatever that is, would come and cull the herd, take out the excess animals and take them up to the Alps and let them free. There were probably people waiting there to shoot them down as they came off the trucks. Every year this happened and nobody ever heard of it. Nobody ever knew that the U.S. Army was the great protector of the wildlife of Italy. Anyway, they wanted to build more damn bunkers. In order to build the bunkers they were going to have to clear some acreage within the forest. They did not own the forest, of course. This was an Italian-owned reserve. The mayor of the town of Pisa at the time, was Communist. The mayor of Livorno was Communist. And when the army applied for license to cut down 3,000 trees the Communists went up the wall. “You Americans, you're destroying the ecology of our country” and all that sort of thing. And the military responded the way you would expect them to. They got mad. And the issue seethed. I went up there a few times to try to calm the boiling waters. Eventually we worked out a deal. it turns out that 3,000 trees is a very

small number. I thought it was enormous when I first heard of it. But when I got up there the army's expert (down from Germany) pointed out that there are more than 3,000 trees in an acre of land. Moreover, policy at Camp Darby was to plant ten trees for each one that was cut down. That's why the forest was so lush, because they kept planting trees. These guys had nothing to do in their spare time, so they planted trees. At any rate, I don't think the Camp Darby authorities had ever mentioned that to the local Mayor—though it probably would have done no good. But eventually the problem was solved and the communist government agreed to the removal of the trees in light of the planting program and in gratitude for the US army's role in the protection and propagation of the natural wildlife of Italy. It was not coincidental that we brought TV into the process and the local boys saw themselves on national television.

With that problem out of the way, we got a frantic call for help from the U.S. military in Verona. It seemed the communist authorities in the north had banded together to close down the US Armed Forces radio. The southern European network from Germany had a repeater in northern Italy, in or near Vincenza from which they rebroadcast to the rest of the country. The system was especially important to them, I think primarily because the next step was television and they wanted to keep the current foot in the door, while they worked on ways to somehow insinuate television into the equation. Well it turned out that the Italian Constitution forbids anyone except an Italian citizen from using the broadcast bands. Some shrewd communist lawyer up there had discovered this and was demanding that they close down the southern European network. That went on and on and on. The Newspapers picked it up and there was embarrassment enough for all. The Italian military wanted to do any thing they could to help us. I had some good friends among the chiefs of staff, they were great people. Finally their chairman, General Pertini I think it was, suggested that I, together with General whatever his name was, the head of the Italian military radio service, try to figure out a solution to the problem. So we had some meetings and we finally came up with a solution which I think still holds today. We signed an agreement, between him and me as a matter of fact. And the solution was very,

very Italian. It was that the Italian government, through the its military authorities, required that as one of the conditions of the U.S. remaining in its bases in Italy, it broadcast on the radio band such-and-such in order to prevent that band from being usurped by commercial users. That's what the agreement says, and that's what happened. I don't know if we have moved on to the television issue yet. Then all the U.S. bases broadcast TV within the confines of their property. The U.S. military naturally wanted to be able to broadcast nationally. I hoped then and still hope that the Italians don't let us do it.

One problem I found in the Embassy, by no means rare in the Foreign Service was the contempt of its civilian staff for the US military. Conversely the military out in the Italian countryside did not greatly admire the Embassy. I proposed setting up a country-wide annual conference at the Embassy to which each US military in the country would be invited. The plan was for three days in which each participant would explain the purpose of his organization and bring up any problems for general discussion. Ambassador Gardner didn't like the idea until I suggested he would get to meet a lot of high ranking military officers and be able to establish his ascendency over them. It was a remarkable success. The first conference was a meeting heavy with generals and admirals, the admiral from NATO AFSOUTH turned up (though he made it clear he was independent of the Embassy) and NATO Brussels sent representatives. The presentations were enlightening to everyone and the discussions were very lively. Even Gardner enjoyed it. The Conferences continued after I left.

The Italians are a marvelous people, marvelous. I remember one guy I went to visit in the south. I traveled a lot from Rome because we had bases and installations all over the country, and I went to a place which shall remain anonymous, but it was a major city and I paid all the protocol calls, Mayor, prefect, military commander, etc. I called on the prefect. When I entered his office he was standing at the window, sort of surveying his domain, a very austere looking gentleman. I greeted him in Italian and started talking to him in Italian. He responded in English. Not great English, but quite serviceable English. And I, naturally—the next thing in these break-the-ice conversations—said “Where did you

learn to speak English so well?" And he explained, "I was in the United States. I was in the States a long time, I was a prisoner of war." And I said, "A prisoner of war?" And he said, "Yes, yes, I went to Georgia, then Alabama and finally I was in Texas. Wonderful country, wonderful time, the people were wonderful." Then I asked him how he came to be a prisoner of war? And he said, "Oh, well, in Africa. I was a commander of tanks." He was a colonel as a matter of fact, and commanded a fairly large number of tanks. And he went on, "it was nighttime and we were pulled up in a camp, a bivouac. We were almost out of petrol and almost out of ammunition, and we were just sitting around the fire, cooking the evening meal and relaxing. Suddenly we were attacked by 'una banda de Australiani'—a band of Australians." I asked, "Commandos?" "No, no, no," he said cheerfully, "la banda de musica." The Australian regimental band had captured a whole battalion of Italian tanks! He thought it was vaguely amusing, what the hell, the war was over. Why fight? To me that was really emblematic of the Italian attitude.

Q: Oh yeah, they are survivors. I have to say that having served in both Italy and Greece I found the Italian attitude much healthier.

SILVA: Oh yes, the Italians revere their past but don't live in it.

Q: And they don't blame other people and sulk and feel people are picking on them. Yeah. we've got problems and we'll... On the political-military side did you get involved in the great tax problem that I think you ran across later on in Naples? This was due to members, Italian civilians who declare their income tax and all that?

SILVA: Oh yes. Nothing came of it. We were involved in it all the time I was there, but it never had any solution, at least while I was there. It just went on and on.

Q: You were there under two Ambassadors. John Volpe first, who was there from '73-'77, what was your impression...

SILVA: John Volpe was, well... I found him amusing, shrewd, intelligent within limits, mostly shrewd. You could see how he would make it in the political world. And how he made it as a builder of highways with special treatment from the state of Massachusetts. My old college roommate went head to head against Volpe some years after college and some years before I knew Volpe, bidding on highway construction contracts. Volpe's company won even though the other guy was the low bidder. But that's the way it was in Massachusetts. John Volpe was a character. A real politician, knew everybody. Had a relationship with local politicians which I must say most people in the Embassy did not appreciate. I thought it was great. It had sort of unfortunate overtones, in that when he met with people in the government, the prime minister for example, they were like two old cronies in the back room in Boston getting together. That's the way it seemed. You could almost smell the smoke. But still, he knew these people. They trusted him, they told him things, he told them things, etc. etc. It was an unusual kind of relationship to have with local politicians. But he was a figure of fun to many people in the Embassy. I got a kick out of him too, because he insisted on speaking Italian. His Italian was the dialect of Abruzzo back when his parents took him to the States in the 1920s. They never really spoke Italian, they spoke Abruzzese. John learned that at home and then he came back to Italy and he spoke a dialect that even the Abruzzesi don't use any more! But it was a kind of Italian and he could make himself understood, but upper class Italians made fun of him, the press took its shots, and so did some people in the Embassy. But he got by. The Italian people loved it. When he went up into these towns in the mountains in the Abruzzo and gave speeches in his terrible Italian it sounded to them like their own. He was fine. I never really had any problems with John Volpe.

After he left, he was replaced by Dick Gardner, who was one of the worst Ambassadors I've ever run into. I think he's now Ambassador to Spain. The story, began, I believe, when he was head of the international law department at Columbia. He knew Brzezinski there, who invented or was one of the inventors of the Trilateral Commission. He brought Gardner in. And as the thing grew they thought they ought to have a southern politician

in the organization to broaden its scope I suppose. And the story goes, it was Gardner who picked Jimmy Carter, who was then Governor of Georgia. Carter never forgot this, it's what gave Carter his credentials, to the extent that he had any, in international affairs, that he was a member of the Trilateral Commission. So he never forgot Gardner. When he became President his first ambassadorial appointment was Rome and it was Dick Gardner as Ambassador. Of course, anyone who thinks an ambassador is a key figure in U.S. foreign relations is kidding himself. But I thought Dick Gardner was an unhappy choice. He had domestic problems, his wife was Italian.

Q: From Venice.

SILVA: That's what she said. She claimed to be from San Daniele near Venice, but Italians said that was a story to enhance her claim to some position in Italian society. I understand, at any rate, that her family really came from Genoa. Her father was a local employee of AID, then USOM in Italy, and presumably that's how she got to the States and met and married Dick Gardner. She was a handsome woman.

Q: Full-figured woman I think was the...

SILVA: Voluptuous is the word that comes to mind. But the common gossip was that she had appetites that I guess her husband could not satisfy and, she had a friend...

Q: It was well known. This was the thing in Italy. This doesn't help.

SILVA: The happy cuckold in Italy is not a figure of fun. It's a figure of disdain. But at any rate, that was the kind of situation. It was an interesting Embassy though. When he first arrived and had his first staff meeting, Gardner announced that he wanted to give speeches in Italy. While he was there he was going to give a lot of speeches, so he went around the table and he assigned speeches. He said, now you do one on NATO, you do one on Italian-American relations in World War I, and he went around the table and every one of the Counselors had an assignment or two or three. I think I did three speeches.

The UN, NATO, CSCE, oh yes I did four, the law of the sea too. What do I know about the law of the sea? Anyway, we all labored mightily and produced I think 15 speeches. He did some rewriting here and there, but basically they were the speeches that were prepared for him by his staff. And these speeches were used by him for four years. I mean, over and over and over again. Every time he went somewhere he gave a speech and he would pick one of them. And of course he had them translated into Italian, his Italian was terrible, but there were some instances where he insisted on giving them in Italian. It was pretty bad.

The worst part of it was that after I left Rome I heard that he had pressured Rizzoli, the big publisher in Milano, into publishing a book for him. It turned out that Rizzoli, I think it's Rizzoli, is the European printer of Reader's Digest, a very, very lucrative operation. And the story goes that it was suggested to them that if they didn't publish his book there might be some difficulties there. That's the story that was going around at the time, one I tended to believe because quite frankly I didn't like the man so I was ready to believe anything. The final blow came in the mail, a copy of a book, I've still got it somewhere, a little paperback, and it was called: “An American Ambassador Speaks,” or something like that, and it was the speeches! All these speeches reproduced in book form. Everybody that I've seen since then who was a member of that group of counselors got a copy of the book, and they all got the same dedication written by Dick...mine said “To my good friend Walt, who had something to do with those exciting days.” Incredible, incredible person. But, well, we survived. He took my secretary, I had a secretary, a very nice girl, I think she's now retiring, she was very nice, bright, vibrant kind of person, who had never, got anywhere in ten years of service. She came to Rome and got assigned to me. I liked her and I thought she had great potential, so I kept giving her additional things to do. She did a lot of routine telegrams. In fact, she could do them very well. And then before you knew it she was, I thought, reaching the indispensable stage, absolutely great. And people kept telling me that they remembered her when she wasn't. But at any rate, it wasn't my success, it was hers. She proved that she could do it. So I put her in for Secretary of the Year, and she didn't win. People in Rome never do. Somebody in Tel Aviv won. That's the way it is. But

at any rate, she was a runner-up and got her name mentioned in the magazine. Now Dick, who is of all the ambassador's I've known, the least aware of what is going on in his own Embassy, found out about this from his staff aide. So he called me up and said “I want her to be my secretary. If she's that good she should work for an ambassador.” What could I say? So we swapped secretaries. I ended up with an FS-3 secretary, which is as high as you get in the business, and he got this FS-7 or whatever it was. Nonetheless, she was great, I must say. But I ended up with a very unhappy secretary.

Q: Oh yes, it was a demotion for her...

SILVA: Yes, it was terrible, but he couldn't have cared less. If mine was the best in the Embassy, he had to have her. That was his attitude, I'm afraid. I hate to think of what he is doing to Spain these days.

Q: I didn't get along with him at all.

SILVA: He was an impossible guy. But his wife... Here's a great story. Remember the earthquake up in the north, up in Friuli? I was put in charge of the Embassy's part in the reconstruction effort, working with the AID representative. So I did a lot of traveling up there, I got together with AID and we helped put together a program for reconstruction, that sort of thing. The Friulani are nice people. They're sort of Austrian basically, more than anything else. They were very, very grateful. We built some schools for them, as we later did in the south. We're great school builders. The program went very quickly, even though there was some funny stuff going on, and before you knew it all the schools were built or rebuilt and the Friulani said they were so delighted with this they wanted to sort of pay us back. They wanted a ceremony, a final receipt of the schools, to express gratitude to America, that sort of thing. Gardner was pleased to accept the proposition, TV coverage was mothers milk to him. So the Friulani arranged for a large hall in a building owned by the Vatican to hold a large ceremony and banquet. The reception would be large. It was no fun putting it together. Anyway, we got this big hall and we arranged a table of notables

at one side, raised on a dais. There sat the Ambassador and Madame, and the Friulani who had come up there—the prefects and the mayors from the towns where the schools had been built. They faced a sea of tables and in the middle a full-fledged TV coverage arrangement by RAI television (the National TV Network). Madame Gardner came in a sort of sea-green gown, I think silk, or some sort of very clingy thin material. It was cut down to about her navel in front. It became immediately obvious from the beginning — I did not seat myself at their table, I sat facing them, right next to the camera people — she was not wearing undergarments. Generously endowed, she tended toward the overripe. Not that I have any objection to over-ripeness, but she was a little overripe. So every time she moved, every little movement, the dress sort of replicated what was going on underneath. The cameraman caught this and he was clearly fascinated. I didn't learn how fascinated until the next day when the coverage (or uncoverage?) came on RAI television news. There were the speeches, the Ambassador, the Prefect, others....and the cameraman was zeroed in on Mrs. Gardner. It seemed any moment, she might turn around, make that one quick movement, when something would fall out of the cleavage. And that's the way it came out on TV. You'd hear in the background people making speeches, and here's the cameraman zeroed in on her chest. It was marvelous, absolutely marvelous.

Q: What was your impression, although it wasn't your bailiwick, did you get involved in Italian politics and what was your impression of the political system there?

SILVA: I didn't get involved except very peripherally at times. You know, you talk to some of them about how they were going to vote in the UN and see if they could somehow convince the foreign minister or the prime minister to go in one direction or another. That was very infrequent, maybe twice in my four years, because generally the Italians voted either with us or abstained. It wasn't that much of a problem. We had discussions on the CSCE at times, but I like to think that I was happily unconcerned, because I was convinced then and I still am that Italian domestic politics don't matter.

Q: Well this was my impression very much. I used to watch the Political Section up in Rome and they would do a dance and send something, "what is the impact of the latest juggling of the government," and the answers in Naples was nobody cared, and rightly so.

SILVA: That's right, it never affected people's lives. You change your government in Moscow and 20,000 people die. In Italy, nobody notices. It didn't seem to make that much difference. The names would change in the newspapers and that was about it.

Q: And there weren't many names.

SILVA: It was the same ones over and over.

Q: The CDU was running everything. Well, tell me, what was your impression of Italy and its involvement in the various external organizations?

SILVA: Cautious. They were always very cautious. Either they went along as good team players in the European bloc, the NATO bloc, etc. or they abstained. I don't recall them ever taking a flyer, so to speak, on a matter of principle, going counter to what it's treaty partners wanted them to do. I was always very impressed with the quality of the people they had dealing with these things at the Foreign Ministry. They've got a first rate foreign service. Absolutely first rate. Of course it's an elitist foreign service, which was probably why it was first rate, as ours was when it was more elitist than it is now. These people I found very badly paid, the foreign service, even by our standards, but money is no object when you come from a wealthy and/or titled family that has all kinds of resources. They tended to be that kind of people. And as a result they could spend their intellectual energies on the job. You could go there at 8:00, 9:00 o'clock in the evening, there'd be people working. You went there in the early morning, there's not a soul in the place. They don't get up at an early hour. If you go between 12:00 and 4:00 in the afternoon there's not a soul there except the guy with the mop. But you could go in the late evening and they'd

still be there working on things they understood as well as better than we did, certainly. Usually, I thought, better.

Q: Did the American foreign policy apparatus use your connection to these very well plugged in people as far as what is going on in Europe, were they able to, I mean were you able to get things on what's happening in European politics from these acute observers and get it back to our people or not?

SILVA: Well, to the extent that our people were interested. Normally no. I would tell the DCM usually what these people were saying. Sometimes he reported it, sometimes he didn't.

Q: What was your impression of the role of Italy in NATO?

SILVA: Well, the most cooperative, I think, of all the NATO partners in many ways. One way was the use of Italian territory for exercises. They were always willing to help produce, in a country that doesn't have that much in terms of unoccupied land, areas where you can drop bombs. But they were always very, very helpful. I think that they brought to the dialogue in NATO enough of a restraint on the adventurists that they were very useful there too. There were many times when we were going to do something in the Middle East and the Italians would object and help bring back some sense of order to our thinking about interventions in the Middle East or outside the NATO area. They were very careful about that. But then at the same time if we needed to have landing rights for military air transport planes going into the Middle East, Saudi Arabia or Israel or Turkey, invariably we could use Sicily as a stopping point, a refueling point.

Q: Were we having any problems with them over Libya?

SILVA: I don't think we had much of a problem. The Italians had problems with Libya. There are those Italian islands, Pantelaria and the one where we have a Loran site that were at issue during one of the confrontations between Italy and Qadhafi. There was

a moment, in fact, when the rumor was that Qadhafi was somehow going to invade Pantelaria, if not both islands, and take them over. But the Italians always had this take-it-easy approach to Qadhafi. And they were probably right. He never did invade. There were the dead Italian military buried in Libya that he threatened to ship back, remember? He was going to dig up the Italian dead from various wars in Libya and ship them back to Italy. Kick out the Italians in their final form! That never happened. And it would never happen because the Italians were so calm about it. Even though the press were screaming, the government took a very calm, reasoned approach to these matters. Much more reasonable than we did. They were upset when we shot down some Libyan fighter planes in the Gulf of Sidra. They were upset by that. They would not have done that. They were upset by it officially and then congratulated us privately, which is another way of doing things in the Italian way. This is terrible but I'm glad you did it.

Q: What was the feeling, again, within the NATO military complex, about the fact that the Italian Communist Party was just about the largest in Europe. How did we feel about this?

SILVA: Well, it depends. Our military were worried about it. I don't think anybody else was. The Italian Communist Party was somewhere between 20-30% of the vote. I would assume that in the middle of the Italian military, 20-30% were Communists. Why not? It didn't seem to affect them in any way. The Italian high command of the military establishment was very sensitive to this, and there were efforts to place known communists out of the mainstream in the military. They never had any problems, that I know of. The Italian military is much maligned, but there are two units in NATO that always get the kudos, in every exercise, every real, live landing exercise and neither of them is American. One is the Italian St. Marco Battalion, their equivalent of our Marines, and the other are the Dutch Marines, with the long hair, ear rings and all. I saw the San Marco battalion in operation at one exercise. I was on a boat off shore. They were good, really good troops. No accidents, no untoward episodes. I think the U.S. Marines lost a couple of men in that same exercise. It was a difficult landing. They were just good. The Italian army has another great group, the Alpini mountain troops—first rate, nobody better in Europe.

Certainly nobody better here, we don't have mountain troops that amount to anything. It's extraordinary. They've got a good air force, outmoded airplanes but outstanding pilots. It's the people that count.

Q: One last question on this period when you were in Italy. You were there during sort of the Watergate period. How did this play?

SILVA: It probably played the way it did in most saloons and bars in the United States. It was not a thing you talked about, nobody worried about it. The Italians didn't get especially excited about it. I think they wondered why the American press got so excited because it was the kind of thing that happened all the time in civilized countries. They didn't find it unusual. In the Embassy you'd talk about it in the Snack Bar. How they were dumb enough to get caught, or why they were dumb enough to do it to begin with. But I don't think anybody then could possibly have foreseen the events that followed, including the eventual resignation. No one could have seen that. It was one of those funny little episodes, they got caught and that's it and it's going to go away and it didn't go away.

Q: Was there any effect as far as the Embassy was concerned on the slow demise of the Nixon presidency?

SILVA: No, I didn't notice any difference at all. Of course its back to the same thing—how important are embassies at times? Certainly that was a period when it didn't seem to make a hell of a lot of difference. I mean we've got a Secretary of State who is falling on his knees and praying with the President or standing up in front of TV and saying “I'm in charge”—that sort of nonsense. It was embarrassing, I suppose, but it didn't affect anything. The Embassy kept doing its thing. Each section did its job. Whether anybody in Washington paid any attention is something else.

Q: One last thing, were you involved at all in the time when the Carter Administration came in and, Carter, one of his things in Europe was he got involved in something called the

neutron bomb. First we're going to put it in and then there was some huffing and puffing about how it didn't kill...

SILVA: It killed people and not things.

Q: Yes, and that seemed to be a true capitalist bomb. And first we said we were going to put it in and then we said we were going to take it out and this got Schmidt in Germany absolutely livid. Did that have any...

SILVA: Yes. I remember that very well. It was a big thing with the Italians. They thought it was outrageous, I mean a bomb that would kill people and not destroy buildings ought to have had a kind of appeal in a country where most of the cities were antiquities in themselves and worthy of preservation more than the people. But it was still something they didn't like and we heard a lot about it. All the time. They were opposed, they were simply opposed. They went along with us, it was interesting. In the alliance they went along with the United States, even though they were violently opposed to the selective nature of destruction, nonetheless they voted with us in the alliance to actually bring it in. Although we never did. At least we said we never did.

Q: Looking at this, the Italians have been our strongest supporter on things like this, also when we were introducing the intermediate range missiles, which came a little bit later...

SILVA: AWACS was the big thing back then, remember, the Airborne Control System that got a lot of publicity during the Gulf War. But AWACS back then was just beginning to be introduced. It was being used by the U.S. Air Force, successfully. It was used in Vietnam successfully, etc. Everybody knew about it. It was a very expensive thing, this huge airplane full of electronic equipment. And we needed then to get other people to accept and use AWACS. It would bring down the unit cost if we could get other people to buy it, so a great push came out of the Department to all the Embassies in the NATO countries to convince them to buy AWACS. We would give them special prices, long term payments, all kinds of inducements to buy AWACS. It did not sell very well but the Italians

bought it. They bought it because we said it was important to us that they buy it. And they bought it, and that changed the whole thing within the alliance. The fact that one of the allies bought this thing convinced the others that it was useful. The Brits had a similar system, I don't remember the name, but it was the fact that the Italians went ahead that sold the rest of the alliance.

Q: The Italians are a very sophisticated people and they have their own interests. They're not anybody's patsy or anything else, but for some reason they have proved to be the most loyal of allies, even at times when we might wonder at our own policy. Why have they been like this?

SILVA: I think it would take a very, very long time to look into why they are that way, historical reasons. I think they like having a muscular big brother, because in the past they got into trouble so often. I think they like that idea, having a big brother. And here's a big brother where there are, what, 35 million Italians living in the United States, so it's a big brother that has a blood connection with a good number of Italian/Americans in the Congress. They used to say that the United States did one great thing for Italy, and that is we welcomed the Mafia from Italy and took them out of Italy to New York! In Italy they know about Ernest and Julio Gallo. They don't have any great respect for the Gallo wines, but they're the boys, they're our people. And there's so and so who is a judge in the Supreme Court and so and so who is a governor, and on and on and on. They're very proud of that. I used to give a lot of speeches in Naples, and one of the speeches that the Italians loved, I would get ovations, standing ovations in towns, small towns, Kiwanis or whatever, was the history of U.S.-Italian relations. Going back to Christopher Columbus and bringing it up to date, that kind of thing. They were fascinated by the fact that I knew that Jefferson found much of the language for the Declaration of Independence in his correspondence with an Italian philosopher and that Palladio up there in Vincenza and his villas, inspired Monticello. Who was Ringo, the famous Ringo? Ringo was an Italian whose name was Siringo, and he was a Pinkerton man working out of New Orleans. The Italian loved all this great stuff, they published it in their local newspapers as though it were

new to them. What was really new of course was that the American Consul General in Naples knew about it. We're fortunate from the Italian point of view in having many faults, and we admit it as they admit it. No one else does. You never hear Frenchman admitting that France is guilty of anything. The Germans too have been reluctant to admit guilt. The Italians don't care. Here we are, take us the way we are. And they think, and I think to a great extent they are right, that Americans are the same. And I think there's a little bond there.

Q: That's very interesting. Because I noted when I came from Greece, where everything was somebody else's fault, and coming to Naples, to have people say "We have a problem here, but we'll take care of it." In other words, it's not your fault, it's our fault, and we're not going to blame you. You don't have to go through this irrational argument with somebody over that.

SILVA: Well, you know Rex Reed is a movie critic for the New York Post, and back in '81 or '82, he wrote something in the New York Post about a movie being made in Italy. It was being made in Naples, and he said the Neapolitans were the worst people in the world, that Naples was the sewer of Italy and Europe. Well, I read that in the local Neapolitan newspaper. The Neapolitans were insulted. I found it insulting too, because Goddammit, I lived there. So I wrote the SOB and his paper (The New York Post I think it was), and among the things I said was that if any one was an expert on sewers, he was. It was pretty nasty, the kind of thing you write but don't send, but I did. I also defended the Neapolitans saying pretty much that they are what they are, they do the best they can. What can anybody else do? Well, the New York Post ran my letter on the front page. They thought it was an amusing beginning to a battle between me and this jackass, this Reed fellow. And then it was picked up the by the Italian newspaper in New York, and then back to several Naples papers. The next thing I know it was being printed on the front pages in Naples, and headlined, "American Consul Defends Naples." I got phone calls, telegrams, I never expected anything like it. I thought this was a little private battle going on and it was

extraordinary, the outpouring from Italians. I suppose it came under the heading “We know he's an American but he understands us.”

Q: Well, you left Rome in 1978 and came to Washington until '81. What were you doing?

SILVA: I went to the Office of Personnel, the Office of Foreign Service Career Development and Assignments, as Deputy Director of the office, where there were an enormous number of people. It was an extraordinary office. There were about 75-80 assignment peoples and counselors in there, and secretaries, and on and on. There must have been 100 people in the office. The bad part of that, of course, was that I had to write their efficiency reports, and how do you write efficiency reports on that many people who are all doing the pretty much same thing? And make them sound different? It was a terrible job from that point of view. But it was fun. I got to know more people in the Foreign Service than I ever would have got to know otherwise because they all came through us one way or another. And I got to understand the weaknesses of the system and the strength of many of its people. There were three or four assignment cycles while I was there, just about everybody came through...except the anointed ones who didn't need the help of Personnel and who had special relationships that assured their assignments. It was interesting, too, because the Foreign Service Act of 1980 intervened, and we got involved in things like rewriting regulations and establishing new operations. An unhappy experience, that, the whole business of the new assignment system where people bid on jobs. It was unfortunate because the intent of the Act, I thought, was to bring more flexibility into the system and have individuals play a more direct role in their own futures, rather than have this anonymous committee decide on what people were going to do. The bidding system was a pretty good idea at the time, I thought. Some time before they were ready to be reassigned people would submit a list of jobs for which they thought they were qualified, etc. You would send in your list of desiderata and then the system would, if it could, give you what you wanted and were qualified for. If it couldn't, you would be sent some place where your qualifications were needed. That's the way the system ought to work. After all, everyone who comes into the Foreign Service signs a piece of paper saying

they are worldwide available. Unfortunately the process was corrupted by the litigiousness that's rife in the country. The man who was then my boss, head of FCA at the time, was an ex-AFSA, American Foreign Service Association president...

Q: A professional union, really.

SILVA: Yeah, and he had been president or vice-president of AFSA and had strong ties, in fact like many, he had made a career out of the AFSA connection.

Q: Who was this?

SILVA: Andy Steigman. He agreed that as part of the assignment process, the telegram that was issued every year announcing the coming season would have to be vetted by AFSA and any changes in the rules or any rules at all in the assignment system would have to be vetted by AFSA. Which in effect gave AFSA a measure of a veto over the process. So you've got the union really running the company. That was tragic because that led to a situation where people could be assigned to jobs and would never go by taking advantage of the appeals process and delaying the assignment. That led to long vacancies among other things. As it is an officer can appeal and appeal and appeal. It goes to the DG eventually, and if he doesn't satisfy your appeal it can go to the Secretary of State. It seems to me a bit ridiculous that the Secretary of State should be involved in the assignment of a secretary or a junior officer. But that's what it's come to. At any rate that was all part of the game in 1981.

It was fun though, because most of the time I was in charge. The first guy left and I was there for four or five months without a chief. The rule than was that the head of FCA had to be an ex-Ambassador. And they kept looking around for an ex-ambassador to fill the job and sometimes they could, sometimes they couldn't. Finally I was in charge for the last six or seven months that I was there. I think I did some good. The assignment panels that we established at that time worked by more democratic rules. The presiding officer did not try to push his own or the sixth floor's agenda through the panel. We assigned

people into jobs only after the panel did a good deal of soul-searching. And the panel got to the point where it was making assignment decisions, I thought, with a view to the person's career potential, what was needed for career development and with a view to the possible following assignment. It was close to being what it ought to be. Nonetheless, the “sixth floor” always hung over the panels like a democlean sword. There were “directed assignments” that were contrary to the views of the panels. About the time I was due to leave we got a new director who was very good. That was Art Tienken. I was ready to leave. I did my four years. Joan Clark was then Director General. I was told that I would be going to go to Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi as ambassador. It was actually one of my choices. It's a beautiful, beautiful country. It was all set. Then at the last moment it was decided that there weren't enough women ambassadors in Africa. So the African bureau decided to send a woman. They had to go to USIS to find her, but they found a woman. So I went back on the shelf and my name was submitted for a dozen other jobs. Cyprus was one. It dragged on and on. It was getting embarrassing. Joan Clark called me and said, “How would you like to go to Naples?” And I said: “Sounds good to me. Anything in Italy is okay as far as I'm concerned.” She said it would not be easy because it was a consular-designated post. The cone designation of constituent posts was an ancient system in the Department that tended to work against our interests. I tried unsuccessfully to do away with the system when I was in Personnel. When I was a member of the Department of State-Department of Labor Working Group one of the guys in the Working Group was from the Department of Commerce. The conal designation of posts was established in the beginning to placate the Department of Commerce at a time when the commercial function was still within State. Commerce complained regularly that commercial officers were not receiving the kinds of recognition that they should. And that there were many posts in the world where an officer with commercial expertise would do better than anyone else. There are indeed a few places of particular commercial interest, Amsterdam, for instance, or Rotterdam. There were some places on the Mexican border, etc., where American business was a main preoccupation. So in order to placate Commerce an agreement was reached to designate each constituent post around the world as being of commercial

interest, of consular interest, of political interest, with a few left as non-designated. In theory an officer of the appropriate cone would be selected to run each post. Anyway, Naples had been designated a consular post, dating back to the days when in fact 90% of function of that post was consular.

Q: I think I was the only consular-designate officer who ever served there.

SILVA: I'm not surprised. One of my objections to these things was the amount of time it took in the Department to fight these things out. To assign an officer of another cone to a designated post took long negotiations with all the bureaus involved. It was really stupid. In the end seldom was an officer of the appropriate cone assigned to a designated post. But anyway, the upshot was that I went to Naples.

Q: Before we get you to Naples, could you say a little bit about your impression, we're talking about a period of time, about the problems or the system and how it worked of women and minorities, particularly we're talking about African-Americans, how it was impacting on the Foreign Service...

SILVA: Affirmative action?

Q: Yeah.

SILVA: Well, I can give you a very good example. I worked on the class action suit that was brought by the women, back in '81 or so. The suit was already a couple of years old, the Department had managed to fight it off. And then it reached a peak back there in '82 or '83, and the U.S. Attorney gave us a list of questions, part of the discovery process before the hearings were held. 103 questions or something like that that we had to answer. And they were things like: “Why are there only two women in class 1,” “Why are most women officers in class 6.” “Why are there more women in consular work in political work.” Well, the right answers were easy to provide, and we did, I thought, certainly to the satisfaction of the U.S. Attorney. The U.S. Attorney was a woman who was perfectly content to go

ahead and represent the Department because she thought we had a very strong case to be made. That is, before 1972 it was legal to discriminate. Since 1972 the Department had not discriminated, but women who came in 1972 and thereafter could not expect eight years later to be FS-1s. The men who came in at that time were still FS-4s and 3s. So it was unreasonable to expect women to be represented equally at all the levels since this thing had started so recently. Women were particularly heavily represented among consular officers for a good reason. Having discovered that the consular cone was a more likely area to get an appointment most women opted for the Consular cone on the exam. Many admitted to me in my Personnel hat that they had done so with the intent to later try to move to the political or economic cone. That was the sort of response we were able to make, we did a lot of computer work and used a lot of comparative figures. The U.S. Attorney thought we had a good case. Women had been discriminated against in the past but it appears that now they're not. Of course then, the then Secretary of State, George Shultz, went before the Congress and beat his breast and apologized for the Department of State and its continued discrimination against women and promised to be a good boy in the future. That destroyed the case, right away. The women won, got all kinds of promotions, you know, as a result. And that's the way the Department has behaved all through this thing, beat its breast, conveying the sense that here this elitist organization had been unkind to some of its people. It was forgotten that among the elites in the old days there were a few women, not many, but there were a few. The fact that there weren't more probably had more to do with the kind of jobs women wanted to do then.

Q: ...plus the fact that it was pretty much the pattern, both sanctioned and accepted, that women would resign when they got married and a woman who didn't resign was a real problem.

SILVA: Yeah, as my wife did. I don't think that was a problem. You could make the case, and I think that the people at the U.S. Attorney's office agreed with me, that an employer should be able to set rules and conditions of employment. No one thinks so anymore, it seems. Now there are quota systems. The Department would not admit to it, but it does

employ a quota system. It reaches down into the bowels of the Personnel system to find people who can satisfy these quotas. Not just women, but African-Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, Aleuts, etc. They are given choice assignments often at levels well above their personal rank and they are promoted quickly.

Q: Did you find that there was a disproportionate promotion of, uh, to promote women and minorities?

SILVA: No question, no question. You still see that going on today. The cliche is that a black Jewish woman with a Hispanic name could write her own ticket.

Q: You were in Naples from '81 to '85. What was the situation in Naples when you arrived?

SILVA: They had just had the earthquake, which you remember better than I.

Q: Yeah, I was Consul General there at the time. Earthquake in November 1980.

SILVA: When I got there the evidence of the earthquake was all over. There were still lots of temporary structures around. Along the Pozzuoli port area waterfront they had set up a great number of lift-van kinds of containers. People were living in these sort of railroad cars, and little businesses were set up in them as well. There were still rumbles. Aftershocks went on long after we got there, for a good six months after the earthquake we were still getting aftershocks. The U.S. decided to come to the aid of southern Italy with an AID program, mostly pushed by by the Italian American members of congress, naturally...especially by Senator D'Amato. It started at around $20 million, and with D'Amato's influence it grew to something like $50 million. It was a substantial amount of money which was to be used to in some way to help the Italians get over the worst of the earthquake. The worst of the earthquake was in the mountains of southern Italy. Villages, some of them medieval villages, were completely destroyed and of course antiquities suffered the most. There were 200,000-300,000 people left with no place to go. The U.S. with the departments discretionary emergency funds first supplied a great number of tents,

water purification units, that sort of thing. Most of Europe came to the Italians with the same kind of help, the Germans, the French, the Brits, Scandinavians, all contributed one way or another to provide shelter, food, water, etc. The earthquake hit during the winter which made it particularly hard on the villagers. AID then came in with this substantial amount of money, to do something. The AID Director, as is often the case, had never been a director before. For AID this was a very marginal operation, this was not the huge programs of Africa and Latin America that go on for entire careers. It was looked upon as a little quickie. But this "quickie" took six years to finish—almost a career. Anyway, they sent this director out, we had long talks and we had a good many disagreements. He finally agreed to talk to the Ambassador. He felt he was a very important person and independent of both the Embassy and the Consulate General. In the beginning we had a very difficult relationship, continuing battles over who was the boss in southern Italy. Unfortunately the Ambassador in Rome was Maxwell Rabb, who most of the time was not with it. He acted as though he was in an early stage of Alzheimer's or something like it. He certainly seemed quasi-senile. But at any rate, we had these battles and most of the time it came out all right. We finally agreed that the program for school building was okay but he usually, not always, cut me out of the process of selecting the beneficiaries. Finally something like 29 schools were built. There were several instances of poor judgment exercised by AID. I guess they have to think big. In one town we built a school with a capacity for 1,500 students, which just happened to be the population of the entire town. Some of that happened.

Q: My impression was that these towns were semi-deserted anyway, because many of the adults had gone to work in Milano and Torino and so on. So you didn't have that many children.

SILVA: Generally those who had left the villages to work in the north were the men..the women and children were left behind at the other end of the remittance chain. Anyway, the idea was that in most cases AID would build regional schools. And in most cases, like in San Angelo de Lombardia (home, by the way to the commanding General of the

Italian Army), we built a very nice school, much nicer than any school my son had ever gone to, with a swimming pool and tennis courts and an internal this and internal that. It was a regional school, and it worked in San Angelo because San Angelo was the biggest town in the area and all the others had, by tradition, sent their kids to school in San Angelo anyway. But they built a couple of would-be regional schools in areas where the towns continued to have ancient antipathies one for the other, and each wanted its own building. At any rate we built schools and we built a few useful clinics (though in the latter case sometimes the towns had neither staff nor the money to hire staff. Few self-respecting Italian doctors are willing to work in a small village.) We built a couple of cow barns, and that was nice for the people who owned the cows.

The American press occasionally would recognize the US program in the south and we'd get a visit from the correspondent in Rome of the Washington Post or the Los Angeles Times. Usually the result was a rather amusing article about the U.S. providing money to one of the richer countries in the world. So I thought that what we needed to do was build something that would have permanent, long-term implications in southern Italy. We developed a program to study the seismicity of the earthquake area, to study Vesuvius, to study Pozzuoli bay (itself part of an ancient volcanic crater), and to set up monitoring stations. Eventually AID agreed. They didn't like it, really, because it's not very sexy. You can't hang one of those hand-shake AID placards on an underwater sensor. But they did install underwater monitors in the Bay of Naples and little things up on the hills that nobody can see, and an electronic communication system. The US Geological Service was involved in setting it up and two or three professors from the University of Naples would periodically read the tapes. AID didn't much like it, but the Italians did. They have a kind of reverence for science, the Italians, as you remember. They thought this was a great thing to do, because it was something they were not then capable of doing alone. They had some very, very sophisticated seismologists and volcanologists and all of that, but they were a little bit behind the curve in terms of the acquisition of the latest electronic equipment. In Long Valley, California, the USG has a very, very old program of monitoring

the seismic uplift in the ground. I think it's one of three or four places in the world where this happens, One other being Pozzuoli. There in Pozzuoli the pillars of the ruin of an ancient temple give graphic evidence of the rise and fall of the ground level. The US has long experience in monitoring the phenomenon of “Vradysism” and was able to provide the same kind of sophisticated equipment to the Italians. In a little apartment on top of Posillipo an office was established, which I hope is still there, where the data is received and stored. It's kept on tape and doesn't require the presence of an operator. You can drop by once in a while and pick up a tape. There is a connection too to Mt. Vesuvio. And the interesting thing is that Vesuvius is expected to blow any day now. The latest readings from there are that it could go today, tomorrow, or a year from now. But it's going to go, and it's going to go in a big way. And I hope that some of the equipment that AID installed there has has helped to give greater precision to any prediction of an event. There are a couple of million people living in the shadow of that mountain and if it erupts the number of casualties could be incredibly high.

Q: When I was there just after the earthquake we had just had the Mt. St. Helen's explosion, and I looked in the National Geographic map and pictures showing trees knocked down and devastation for about 20 miles. So I took a compass and put it in the middle of Vesuvius and ran 20 miles, and boy oh boy, including the Consulate General, the whole city of Naples falls right within that 20 mile range. It's scary.

Well, how about reporting on local, southern Italian politics?

SILVA: I did a lot of that. By then the staff had been cut further. We had one officer who was supposed to be a Political/Economic Officer and we had the Commercial Officer, but that didn't give us real reporting assets. The Political Officer was an Economic Officer who had pretty much failed in his own cone. He didn't have any Italian, and couldn't hold a conversation with consulate contacts. As a result, I did all the reporting. Quite a bit, actually. Most of it was designed to show the Embassy that southern Italy, with one-third of

the population, played an important role in national politics. The nationalist/fascist Party in Naples,...

Q: Was that the MSI?

SILVA: Yes. It had its natural home in Naples and when it acted there were national repercussions. So we did a lot of educational reporting, educating the Embassy and the desk. We did a long series of telegrams on the parties in the south — how they were organized, where they came from, who were the leaders, why they differed, when they did, from the national parties' platforms. You know, even the Christian Democrats worked quite differently from the way the same party operated in the North. We did a lot of that, we did a lot of election reporting. There always seemed to be elections in the offing in the South, municipal elections, etc. And I always felt, when I did reporting primarily for the Embassy, including municipal election reporting, that when you have an election in Bari or Brindisi or Taranto they tell you something about the whole area, and what's going on. The Embassy was not particularly thrilled with that sort of thing, but I did it anyway.

We had two major elections while we were there. It was rather hectic, because it takes a long time to get to Taranto and Brindisi and Reggio Calabria and the other major centers of the south. It's a long haul, and you spend a couple of days and see people from morning to night and then you rush back and try to write a telegram. It was a hectic time, but it was useful, and I think we were very close to the mark on the elections, closer than the Embassy. That, I found, was not hard to do in most cases. Embassies work too much by consensus. The reporting officer in an Embassy has much less leeway to express an opinion that might differ from others. There are going to be discussions, inside the section, between the sections themselves, between agencies, and then, between the section and the front office. Things get watered down.

Q: And they tend to reflect the conventional wisdom of the capital, when you get down to it.

SILVA: Yes, and I find even recently when I have visited consular posts as an inspector, that you get a lot more interesting reporting. It may not be accurate, but it's interesting because it's a different point of view.

Q: Having served in Rome and picked up sort of the Roman attitude, did you find, within our own establishment, the Embassy and all, a sort of the disdain for the Mezzogiorno? I mean, anything that happened there was sort of lower class, or something like that?

SILVA: Absolutely. I must say I didn't feel that way when I was in Rome. I felt that way towards the Consul General in Naples, who I thought was a complete utter ass.

Q: Who was this?

SILVA: This was Ernie.

Q: Ernie Colantonio. Well he was sort of the godfather who returned to his native soil. At least that was my impression.

SILVA: Well he was. Even his Italian relatives moved in with him from that town outside of Naples. He was still recalled by Neapolitans as a joke. Anyway, I didn't feel that way about the south. Of course I traveled in the south from the Embassy and hardly anyone else did. The Military side took me to Naples, to NATO, and to the US military sites in Brindisi, etc. I found the people in the Political Section of the Embassy, the domestic political reporters, never went to the south. They went to Milano, they went to Venice, they went to Florence. They had acquired the northern Italian attitude. The Mezzogiorno is like a poor, rather disreputable relation, a burden to be fobbed off as quickly and quietly as possible....

Q: You got this from some of the prefects. Their wives would complain to my wife about having been sent down to this godforsaken place, why can't they go to...

SILVA: I tend to be an activist.. hell, I am an activist. I upset the Embassy constantly from Naples. By trying to do something. That at least kept their interest in Naples alive. I'm afraid I pretty much ignored the Embassy in many ways. I went to Rome maybe once a year, no more than that, all the time I was there at least to attend the annual conference. But I was constantly queried from Rome — asking when I was coming up there, seldom about what I considered the main purpose of my post, reporting on the south. Though the Embassy seemed leery of what I was up to, I still am convinced that everything I did in Naples was in the US interest and redounded to the credit of the US. That was my job. The Embassy saw it as boat-rocking.

An example. I started a commercial organization called the United States-Southern Italy Trade Organization. In Naples there was no sign of the Chamber of Commerce, with its headquarters in Milano, no sign that they were active in or indeed had any interest in the Mezzo-Giorno. Many Italian businessmen in Naples, the big pasta makers for example, were members of the Chamber in Milano. They never visited the Chamber, never got any benefit from it. I had no intention of competing with the Chamber, and certainly didn't have the resources if that had been my intention. So I pushed for the organization of the United States-Southern Italy Trade Organization. It wasn't a Chamber of Commerce, it was what its title implied. It was intended to promote trade between the US and Southern Italy—two-way trade. The Italian Chamber of Naples provided a room and a secretary. One of the members, a newspaperman, provided printing facilities. The director, a retired Italian/American businessman, was unpaid. The only expense was the secretary. It was a very informal, old country-boy operation. But it showed signs of turning into something useful. Within the first six months we helped arrange two trips to the States for the members. They thought it was great! They made excellent contacts both to sell their products and to represent American products in Italy. The major pasta manufacturer from Salerno, still talked about it four years later when I left Naples. He is now exporting pasta to the U.S. and has bought American packaging equipment. That was the intent of the organization. To cut mutually beneficial deals, to introduce southern Italian products to the U.S. and

encourage the purchase of U.S. products in Southern Italy. The Embassy found out about it. On the next visit of the Ambassador (they were mercifully infrequent) he came as usual with his interpreter and his latest staff aid, a brand new FSO. Rabb, as usual, didn't know what he was talking about. He was repeating what the Commercial Counselor in Rome had told him. The staff aid tried to tell me what the Embassy was upset about. Finally Rabb said, “Before you go any further you better tell the Department what you are doing.” I replied that though I may have been the initiator, the catalyst, I was not officially part of the organization. I was not a member (members paid dues). Our little one-man commercial office provided services to the organization but the same services we provided to any Italian or American businessman. observer.”

As it turned out the American Chamber of Commerce in Milano was the instigator. They believed that the little group in Naples would somehow undercut them. So, before I could notify the Department, I got a telegram from the Department asking what the hell was going on? The Chamber of Commerce in Milano complained that the Consulate had started a second chamber in Naples in competition with it, that it was trying to take away their membership. And it went on and on and on. We still kept working at it. And finally I agreed with the Embassy that there would be no direct relationship between the Consulate and this organization, but that I would still continue to have contacts with them and provide them with advice and counsel, etc. The Embassy didn't like even that but they accepted it. The Chamber in Milan did not. They felt it was an illegal operation, that the Consulate in Naples was doing all these terrible things to destroy the Chamber. I replied to the Department that the establishment of the organization never gave the Chamber a thought, that perhaps if the Chamber in Milan had ever paid any attention to the south except to collect dues from their southern members a local initiative would not have been necessary. What was happening now was helping U.S. trade with southern Italy and helping with some Italian trade as well. As to undercutting the chamber, we offered to assist in converting the organization to a branch of the chamber. No interest. In fact the organization had a number of members from Milan and Torino, none of whom

dropped their memberships in the Chamber. Alfa-Romeo for example was one of the most enthusiastic members of the group. Alfa-Romeo was putting up a plant in southern Italy, a huge thing in the area of Avellino or Benevento, and they thought the organization was useful to them. But that wasn't good enough. The American Chamber of Commerce didn't want any competition, whether it benefited U.S. trade or not. Eventually the director in Milan was under some sort of cloud because he had been spending money from the Chamber to provide an apartment to an Italian lover and all kinds of money had disappeared. But, that's irrelevant. The Chamber's objections kept the Embassy's interest alive. The Commercial Counselor at the Embassy (a former Commerce Department district director in the US, for whom the assignment in Rome was a sort of golden handshake) was very upset. I was told that it was almost the exclusive subject of his contributions to Embassy staff meetings. He was apparently getting flak from the American Chamber in the US through the Commerce Department.

When I left Naples the organization was still operating but some of the steam had gone out of it. By now it may be dead. That helped bring Max Rabb down to Naples. I urged him to meet the members of USSIT to see for himself that they were prominent and influential businessmen (I knew that would interest Rabb) and not subversives. Moreover, I had repeatedly suggested to come south on a protocol visit. The authorities in Naples, including the US Navy and the US Admiral heading NATO, as well as the Italians, wondered why he never visited them. I suggested that the timing should coincide with a big reception at the Castel del'Uovo to be given by the Italian Military where he could meet everybody and be seen by everybody. Max of course was invited but he didn't want to pay any official visits. Hard to imagine, an Ambassador, or a staff that will let an ambassador visit a regional capital without calling on local officials. But he said he wanted to come to Naples to talk to me, go to the reception, and then go off to Avellino to see one of the schools that had been built by AID. Not incidentally, RAI Television planned to cover the AID effort on a special program and wanted to get pictures of him at the school. So he said “I don't want to see the mayor, I don't want to see the prefect, I don't want to see

any of those people." I told him "You've got to do it. You don't want to, but you've got to." Well, he was very, very upset but he agreed and we went around and we had these very uncomfortable meetings, where he just sat slumped over lapsing occasionally into a semi-stupor during which they mentioned the huge reception they were holding, noted that I would be coming, and expressed the hope that he would come as well. And Max piped up, "Of course!" He immediately perked up a little bit. So we went to the reception. I tried to take good care of the Ambassador though I must say I had trouble with the role.

I was trying to do the right thing, and stayed with him. People were walking all over that huge inside courtyard of the castle where this thing was being held. Max had brought with him in his entourage his Political-Military Counselor, Peter Semler. During the evening Peter walked by and said "Hi!" I said "Hi" and the Ambassador said "Hello!" After Peter had passed, the Ambassador turned to me and asked "Who was that, he looked familiar?" By then Peter Semler had been with the Embassy over a year! He had been there over a year, been to morning staff meetings for a year, and the Ambassador didn't recognize him, which was some indication of the state of his disintegration. Anyway, it was amusing.

During this time too I had some good friends who were in the archeological business at the museum in Naples. I loved that museum and I got to know some of these people rather well. I had been to Pompeii and Herculaneum several times. It was a great place to take visitors. Then one morning I had a phone call from the director at Herculaneum, Giuseppi Magi, saying "we've just finished the excavation of the beach area and found some alcoves with a lot of skeletons. Come and see." They had gone farther towards the ocean and they had actually finally dug down to the original beach level. And there, in alcoves built into what had been the city wall, alcoves that had been used to shelter fishing boats, they found all these skeletons. He pointed out "This is very interesting because it was always believed that, unlike the population of Pompeii, the people of Herculaneum managed somehow to escape in that eruption of 79 AD and that's why we never found any skeletons. Suddenly, there we are on the beach and find all these skeletons. Somebody

ought to be really interested in this and help pay for the continuation of this excavation. Because we've run out of money."

Q: They're right in the middle of a populated area and all that...

SILVA: Indeed. So, I told him okay, I would make some phone calls and see what I could find. I had met one guy from the National Geographic some time before in the company of Jim Creagan. Remember Jim Creagan?

Q: Yes, Jim Creagan was the Political Officer, he is DCM in Rome now. Very astute...

SILVA: He's very good. But anyway, at a party sometime in the past I had met this guy from the Geographic but forgotten his name. Jim Creagan had been there, so I called him and asked if he remembered this guy's name. He did. So I called the fellow, Lou Mazzatenta, told him what had happened and suggested it would be nice if the Geographic would take on the godfather role in helping to continue this thing. He said he would take it up with his superiors. Next thing I know I had a call from Gil Grosvenor who was then the No. 1 at the magazine and the organization and the grandson of the original founder. He said he was going to send somebody over there to take a look, see if it was worthwhile. So they sent a guy over. Meanwhile I had talked to Rabb about these conversations. When I told him Grosvenor had called he told me he wanted to be involved if anything came of it. Naturally I assured him I would keep him informed. The magazine sent a photographer and writer and turned out an initial story on the find. Then they agreed to fund a substantial portion of the work and to send a paleoanthropologist to examine the skeletons, to re-articulate the skeletons, write up the condition and pathology of the remains. They sent a lady named Sarah Bisel, who had been trained under a man named Angel at the Smithsonian. She was good. Anyway, they agreed to send her, they gave her a grant for a year, and then they provided some funds for other things.

Rabb was not very happy about all this. It was getting a lot of coverage in the press and television and he would have rather had it happen in Rome. But I invited him down and

he actually came to Naples, paid a visit to the site, and got his picture in the paper. But it was obvious Max would have preferred to be covered by the Geographic. At any rate, the Geographic was very pleased initially, they ran a second article on the subject of Herculaneum. They also did a TV thing of the dig, very well done by Joe Seamans of WQED in Pittsburgh (whose father was the Seamans of MIT). Small world that these people move in. Anyway, it was a pretty good thing and they decided that a group would come over to look at the work that they had been paying for. They came, the Board of Trustees, and the editor of the magazine, the people who had done some of the writing, and Gil Grosvenor. They all came over. They intended to return by way of a brief stop in Rome. So I called Rabb and suggested that he ought to have a reception for them and invite the important people of the Government to it. This was a major thing for Italy! The National Geographic can make a tourist Mecca of a historical site. So he agreed, reluctantly strangely enough. There was a rather nice reception to which most of the ministers came. I think Max was surprised by the response. Gina Lollobrigida also came. I guess she was Max Rabb's dream girl. I was told she was a regular guest at Embassy receptions. Even 40 years after her career in the movies began she was a gorgeous, gorgeous woman. I seems she always accepted invitations from the Embassy and apparently Max invited her to improve the decor of his parties. She was a hit among the Geographic board members. All went well at any rate. It made Max relatively happy about the whole thing, although he never really accepted the notion that there should be anything going on in one of his consulates where he was not directly in the middle of the spotlight — even though if he had been in the middle he would have slept through it all.

The Geographic thing lasted a long, long time. Finally, after two or three years, unfortunately, the Society walked away from it. In the meanwhile Sarah Bisel did a fantastic job in assembling, preserving and interpreting the bones. She had discovered how many children women had had, what they died from, the diseases they'd had. One of the skeletons on the beach was a Roman solider who still had his sword with him, The ash had even preserved bits and pieces of leather from his sandals. He had his

tool bag on his back. Most Roman soldiers were also specialized craftsmen and carried their tools with them. This guy had been some kind of carpenter and had his tools with him, as though he was trying to escape. Sara found out that the reason he had been in Herculaneum was that probably he had been furloughed for a serious wound he had received. She found he had had a broken leg with evidence of fistulas and pus. The leg had never healed well and since he was not fit for regular service he had been sent to Herculaneum. They found jewelry on a woman that made it apparent she was wealthy. All this kind of stuff kept coming up. Then they found the boat. As they were digging beyond the beach they found a wooden boat in a remarkable state of preservation. It was intact but completely turned to charcoal; it had been enveloped by hot ash so it had completely carbonized and simultaneously preserved in the hardening ash. It was virtually intact, with a mast, evidence of shroud lines and sails, indications as to how the mast was stepped. It was absolutely remarkable, except it was very fragile. At a touch it could fall apart. So I called the Geographic and they were excited by it because they had also been involved in the Cyprus boat. So they got a guy out of the University of Texas which has a Nautical Archeology department. (Interesting, University of Texas, of all places.) So they gave this man a grant to come over to study the boat to try to do something about preserving it. I forget his name, he was a charming guy who had barely finished high school and had gone on to be an electrician for 20 or 30 years during which he developed a hobby of boats, building first model boats, then big boats, and then he got interested in boats generally and started studying them in museums. And he became, without an educational background, one of the world's great experts on ancient boats. He went to Cyprus for that boat, he went to Scandinavia for the Viking boat, all that sort of thing. He was thrilled with the boat, he said it would provide information for the first time on how these little boats were rigged in Roman times. Apparently no one knew how they rigged their sails. There were a lot of discussions, a little digging, they found a helmsman with an oar still in his hand underneath the boat. It had turned over in the waves, apparently, and he had been killed trying to escape. It was all very exciting stuff, but the question was how do you preserve the boat and get it out of the matrix of solidified ash that held it? Being the

kind of person he was, our man came up with a brilliant solution. You got gallons and gallons of Elmer's glue and just painted this whole charcoal boat in Elmer's glue. You kept applying the glue until you got a solidified boat. Then he would take it apart, bring it to shore, and reassemble at the museum. In the process we would also learn how it was built. The Italians didn't like that idea. (By then it was seen in Italian Academia that there was a lot of mileage to be made in Herculaneum and foreigners ought to be pushed out of the game.) They thought the Elmer's Glue notion was too simple. All sorts of university professors, from Rome, from Pisa, from Genoa, came to look at the boat, especially from the traditional maritime states, from Venice, from Genoa, Pisa. It seems special units at the universities in the maritime states deal with boats. They thought the Elmer's glue idea was ridiculous and said the hell with it, we're going to do it ourselves. So when our friend from the university of Texas was away, they took a forklift, dug under the boat and lifted it up. Of course they destroyed the boat. Not much is left except a few nails and a couple of brass fittings. After that the Geographic left quietly.

Q: While you were there the Camorra, the local mafia, got more vicious, didn't it?

SILVA: Yes, because of the earthquake, I think, the vast profits that were being made as a result of the earthquake.

Q: I have to say that about a week after the earthquake I had a busload of Italian-American Congressman who came down. Most of them come from the Naples area, not directly from Naples but from that area. Somebody had experience with the Friuli earthquake and said that there was an organized force that was really very useful, which was the Alpini alumni, the former members of the Alpini regiments came there and were very helpful, and asked if there was anything similar around here. And I said, rather facetiously, that the only force that you've got in southern Italy, particularly in this area, is the Camorra. It didn't sit very well with them.

SILVA: Because they all remember it well, I'm sure. But you're right, the influence of the Camorra did get worse after the earthquake. It was brought home to us in the consulate because of Rosanna Capasso, a secretary in the consulate, whose husband was a Camorrista from whatever little town it was on the slopes of Vesuvius.

Q: That was supposed to be a hotbed, a center of activity.

SILVA: Her husband was a member of the City Council or something, but he was a Camorrista, everybody knew that. He was a brute apparently and beat here and her daughter regularly. She came to work more than once with bruises showing. Her mother had moved away years before and was living in Venice. Rossana eventually quit the Consulate and moved to Venice because she was afraid for her life and the life of her daughter. After especially bitter disagreements with her husband his response was that he was going to take the daughter and dump her in the bay.

On the other hand we had a code clerk, I forget her name, she was there when you were there, a tall gangly woman. She lived in Naples, in an apartment in the area not far from Santa Lucia...

Q: This is where the contrabandistis live...

SILVA: Right, it's a Camorra stronghold. There was a lot of crime in Naples. Much of it was what might be considered victimless crime, contraband cigarettes, Gucci knockoffs, and making counterfeit labels for clothing, but violent crime took place primarily within the Camorra family. Anyway, there were burglaries taking place in Naples, and she lived smack in the middle of this area controlled by the gangsters. She never had any problems. I learned why eventually. Although she spoke very little Italian, she was always affable and polite. She did all her shopping right there in the neighborhood. The little grocery store on the corner, the little fruit stand beyond. She lived as though she belonged there, she

showed them respect, so they respected her and they protected her. They went out of their way to protect this woman. She told me she had never bothered to lock her door.

There were trials going on at this time. The head of the local Camorra, a young man, was sent to prison. The trial seemed to last forever, but surprisingly he was convicted. However, the press said he was still running the organization from prison. The police admitted it. He had never been guilty of crimes of extreme violence. He never killed anybody, they said. The police seemed to accept the Camorra as a fact of life as long as they didn't go too far. In fact the Camorra was once an arm of the local authorities. The Camorristi in late Renaissance times were a class of people, the bully boys, “Teddy boys,” “Teppisti.” Along with the huge folding knives worn in their sashes, they wore short jackets, bolero jackets, taken from the Spanish. The jacket was called a “camorra,” so they came to be called camorristi. They were just local boys, organized mostly to protect people from the occupiers, the French or the Spanish, etc., whoever was occupying Naples at the time. The Mafia grew up in Sicily for the same reason, as a protection agency for their own people. In those days Naples still had customs gates. When you left or entered Naples you went through the gate and paid duties. It was difficult to get people to do this work in those violent times because some of the people going through the gate didn't want to pay, and violence was sometimes necessary. So the government actually turned over the customs duties to the Camorra. That's what gave them their big start. They're still doing something like that. They take a cut out of everything.

Q: This was also a period where the terrorist groups were sort of...how did that...did that have any...?

SILVA: Well, that's when they started providing guards for me. From the Embassy's point of view there was a serious threat from the terrorists, the Red Brigades, as well as the Camorra. There was one disturbing incident, we were in a car as a part of a cortege going to church along the waterfront, a church near the Royal Palace. There were at least a 100 cars lined up, filled with “notabile”, and a Naples kind of traffic jam ensued. We were

going to a church service for a member of parliament who had been killed by terrorists. A couple of guys went by on a scooter two or three cars ahead of us, fired through the window and killed the man inside. It was another deputy. And they got away. It was hard to imagine how in that traffic jam. There were thousands of people, cars, police, everywhere. But I suppose the scooter made it easier. Not only did they make the getaway from the original crime, but they got out of Naples, according to the local press because they were smuggled out by the Camorra. There was never any doubt that that is what happened. They had made a deal. The Camorra helped them out in exchange for something, and the something was weapons. The Camorra thereafter turned up with Uzis and other exotic guns that theoretically they got from the terrorists. At least that's what the Agency and the FBI thought.

It was an uncomfortable period. The Agency turned up the hit list for the people in the South, and number one on the hit list was Admiral Bill Crowe, who was the NATO commander in Naples and number two was me. Obviously neither of us was hit, but as a result I got guards from the local police. It was alright, but kind of a pain. It was expensive. When I traveled and I had another car with three cops in it and got to a town or a city like Taranto and they provided protection, I would end up buying lunch for 10 people. It was very expensive, and I didn't get reimbursed. But on the weekends Mary and I would still sneak out. We'd either just walk out the back door and walk up town or take the funiculars up to the museums, or we'd go down to the garage, get in our car, and drive out and go where we wanted to go out of town.

Q: When I was there, before Dozier was captured, I walked every street in Naples by myself. I used to take the streetcar, and just go off.

SILVA: We never felt endangered, anywhere in Italy. Of course Mary had her purse snatched twice in Naples —"Scipped" we used to say, from "scippatori", purse snatchers. By the time we left there was a growing tide of violence against obvious tourists..robberies

of rental cars at the toll booths on the highway...earrings, necklaces, bracelets snatched from women on the street.

But still, Naples was a very special place, controlled chaos in some ways. The local paper once wrote that there were more municipal employees per capita in Naples than in any other city in the world. It was probably true but no one really knew how many there were. One day it was announced that every city employee had to report to work, and if he didn't he wouldn't get his check. Something like twice as many people turned up at City Hall as were expected. The surplus almost filled the square outside. They had no idea how many people worked for the city and were getting checks from the city treasury. It was that kind of place. They didn't collect the garbage for a long time, not just once, more than once, collection simply stopped. Things got pretty bad at one point. But Naples survives. That's the great Italian gift, the will to survive. Eventually the garbage was towed away. It never got as bad as some parts of New York City where the garbage accumulates in vast amounts over a long period of time. I like the city of Naples and I like Neapolitans.

Q: I found, almost how the system works, you begin to absorb the local things and if there's a prejudice against the locality, which there is obviously tremendous prejudice against the south on the part of Rome and even our Embassy, it puts you at odds with things.

Well, you left Naples in 1985. What did you do?

SILVA: I came back without an assignment. I had not played the game, I had not entered the job sweepstakes and when I came back I didn't have an assignment. I went to see the Assistant Secretary who told me it had been her plan to put me into the spot of Cyprus coordinator, which had existed, certainly up until then since the 1970s. But she said that unfortunately they had decided to abolish the job as an economy measure.

Q: Who was the Assistant Secretary?

SILVA: Roz Ridgway, for European Affairs. Then she asked me if I would like to go to New York for the General Assembly to represent EUR. That seemed like a good thing to do at the time, so I went. I was there from September to Christmas.

Q: What did it mean at the time to "represent EUR?"

SILVA: Well, each bureau sends somebody during the General Assembly. It was a way to reinforce the staff of US/UN, a way to add another body to each of the geographic areas. So there was somebody from AF, NEA, East Asia, etc. You were a lobbyist, which I guess freed the regular US/UN staff to do whatever things they normally did, report, write speeches, and prepare people for making speeches before the General Assembly. The Bureau representatives would go around to see the representatives of the countries in their area. For me, it was European countries. I was supposed to try to talk them into voting our way on whatever issue, try to explain our position on these issues. I think sometimes effectively and sometimes not. In a couple of cases it worked reasonably well because the representatives of these countries would be just as new to New York as the agent of the bureau was. They were sent by their country from their respective ministries of foreign affairs to reinforce their Embassy staffs. So you have two new people dealing with each other. But when you were dealing with persons who were members of the regular representation, who were in new York, had been there for years, some of them for many years, and you're the new boy, it's very different. Members of the staff of US/UN have the time to build up relationships. The EUR beat was the most difficult I think, European missions at the UN had little or no flexibility in dealing with issues. Decisions were made in the national capitals. Africa it seemed to me was the easiest to work. During the General Assembly, the UN missions of African countries were reinforced by people from the capitals who were themselves high ranking members of the government and able to influence positions.

Q: Were there anything you were trying to push? This would be the session of '85.

SILVA: One of the things we were very deep into at the time was the Law of the Sea. I can vaguely remember many, many discussions on the Law of the Sea.

Q: Obviously you were an expert, having just come out of the Bay of Naples.

SILVA: Well, we did a lot of reading of course on all these issues, but our personal knowledge was pretty superficial, no matter how much we read. But then you had talking points, non-papers, which some of us used as handouts. It was okay. I remember the most effective relationship I had on this Law of the Sea was with Malta. The guy who was representing Malta at that time had been sent to help the Permanent Representative (thereby incidentally doubling the size of the mission), and I think he felt a little bit out of things too. So I think we did convince Malta to at least abstain. What I found fascinating at the UN was to sit in on assembly and committee sessions and to see how issues were discussed and by whom. One doesn't hear much about the Republic of the Maldives normally but at that assembly they were very visible and vocal during the discussions of the law of the sea and issues of ecology. I recall their ambassador saying that, if as some predicted, the sea would rise because of the “greenhouse effect” his country, whose highest spot was about six feet above sea level would cease to exist.

Q: Who was our Ambassador at that time?

SILVA: Oh my. Vernon Walters. John Lodge was one of them. Walters was the head of it, of course. John Lodge died during the General Assembly. Who else? A woman ambassador who was quite good, and some guy who has since retired but still lives up there and sort of makes a living out of the UN one way or another.

Q: Did you get any feel for the operation? What was the mood and how it was working and all? Sort of as the new boy in there looking at it?

SILVA: Well, there were a lot of hard chargers up there. I don't know how effective it was. It seemed to me, that to the Foreign Service as a whole, assignment to the UN was not

a plum. It ought to have been, of course, but it wasn't. And one of the reasons it wasn't was the question of the cost of living, the fact that you are serving what might as well have been a foreign country but didn't get your rent paid, for example, you didn't have access to duty-free things, etc. You'll recall not long ago there was one of those periodic hassles about the rents being paid for the Ambassadors at the Mission. So it was not considered a plum, and to many people it was outside the mainstream, as we used to like to say. So a lot of the people who were there were very talented, but they were almost frenetic in their desire to achieve something. Gotta get this done, gotta get that done, gotta get my name on something to make myself known, to make it look as if I'm the greatest officer in the Foreign Service so I'll get a decent assignment the next time around. That sort of thing. That was obvious. It was an intense place as a result, very intense.

Q: Well, then what happened to you?

SILVA: When I came back in the end of December or so, I got a call from Bill Harrop, then the IG, trying to recruit me for the inspection corps. I said I would think about it. Then the senior officer division of FCA called and asked, “How would you like to be an inspector?” And I said “Not particularly.” They insisted that there was not much else available then and a short stint as an inspector wouldn't hurt. So I said okay, for a while, I'll do whatever has to be done. So I went and reported to Bill Harrop. That was December of '85 or January of '86, something like that. It was still the old Inspection Corps, that is, it was run by a career Foreign Service Officer. Most of the staff was career Foreign Service. A very small staff at the time.

Couldn't have been more than 50-55 people in the whole operation. Lots of people doubling in brass. We had five or six teams going out and inspecting. They were then adhering to what was considered the ideal schedule of inspecting every post within three years, at three-year intervals, that is. The notion was that since most assignments are two years or four, if you inspect each post every three years, everybody in the Foreign Service would have the benefit of an inspection. It seemed to work.

For my first inspection I was assigned as the Deputy Team Leader to Julius Walker, who had been there a year already, I guess. We immediately split the team and he took half of it to Greece and Turkey and I took the other half to East Africa and the Indian Ocean. My team did Kenya, the Seychelles, Mauritius, the Comoros Islands, Madagascar. It was great fun and very interesting. It took more than three months to do that inspection. There were a lot of embassies and you have to do a minimum time in each one. And there were places like the Comoros Island which in theory could be done in one day. There were three people in the Embassy (headed by a charge) and there were three of us on the team. We weren't able to do it in one day because there was only one flight a week. Once you get there you're stuck for a week. There was a similar situation in Mauritius, where you had to time your work according to the airline schedule. But it was a fascinating inspection. The Comoros Islands didn't have a resident Ambassador, the Ambassador to Madagascar was also named to the Comoros Islands. And of course the Comoros were the islands where the Katanga guerrillas, those storied soldiers of fortune, took over. And the Sheik or the Shah of the Islands or whatever he was, was somewhere in Europe or Libya getting medical treatment for a wide variety of terrible diseases. And these guys were running the place. You'd see them in trucks around town with their machine guns and camouflage clothing. By then, they were all old men with pot bellies. If they were trying to swagger, they didn't succeed. I mean when was Katanga? Back in the '60s! And here 20 years later the same old guys were playing the part.

Anyway, the Ambassador to Madagascar, whose name escapes me... a political appointee... sold the opening of an Embassy on the Comoros as vital to U.S. interests. He had argued that the Comoros islands were the cork on the bottle, so to speak, because the oil from the Persian Gulf went through the straits of Madagascar around the horn and passage through the straits was controlled by the cork, the Comoros Islands. That was his argument, and the Department bought it. Also, there was a strong feeling in the Department, you remember back in the '60s and into the '70s. of “universality” — any independent country ought to have an Embassy.

I also agreed. I think you need an Embassy in every independent country. Every independent country has one vote at the UN, and even if there's nothing else, that's sometimes worthwhile. And of course we are the world leader still, and a leader should be in touch with his followers. Of course, we ought to do it cheaply, but we don't. I think at that time my inspection report led to something else. The inspection report said very clearly that we thought the Comoros Embassy was probably adequate in size, except they didn't need a communications person since they didn't have any communications equipment. They had a trained communicator sitting there doing nothing. They had a radio and they were able to communicate with Nairobi by radio. It seemed to me that was enough. If they needed to deal with an emergency, they didn't need the panoply of a normal Embassy. I think that was repeated often enough in the report that out of that came a little study that created what came to be called the “special Embassy.” It would be an embassy that would operate with minimum equipment, minimal numbers of people and would have a minimal role to play — representation and not much else. Not even much reporting and certainly not subjected to the heavy traffic that goes to big embassies. I still think that was a great idea and it would have worked except that we've got a Foreign Service that is no longer disciplined and personal agendas take precedence over both the good of the service and the national interest as defined by the executive and legislative arms of the government. I've seen many cases in the seven years or so that I've been inspecting where these so-called “little” embassies are staffed with 10-15-20 people and where the Ambassadors keep clamoring for more of everything. They keep growing. As a result, so you don't end up with the lean little representational machine we need to invent. You end up with something like the Embassy to Paris. And it's not just that little embassies are too big; big embassies are too big too. It's hard to deal with that because having been anointed by the President, an Ambassador becomes a kind of God-like figure who can do anything he wants to do. The fact that he has a presidential mandate gives him an extraordinary power, in and out of the Department. So he gets more deference than perhaps he should. I recall that in Rome the Ambassador's wife decided she wanted the renaissance tiles of the ground floor of the Villa Taverna covered with wall to wall white carpet. It was done

at a cost of five figures. The Italians thought it a travesty. (So did most Americans). In no time the carpeting was covered in dirt tracked in from the garden. And Madame decided to have it removed. In one case the Department agreed that one of those special Embassies in the South Seas should get a naval attach#. This was an island. The Ambassador discovered that the little Embassy in a neighboring island had a naval attach# assigned. I'm sure he didn't know what a naval attach# did, but he wanted one too. The Department was weak enough to go along with this and authorized the assignment of a naval attach#. This sort of thing happens all the time. Part of the special embassy thing is that you cut down on traffic to the post to cut down on the burdens of the post. So, you do that, and you get to a place in Africa, for example, where the Ambassador complained bitterly that he wasn't getting the FBIS stuff on the Far East, Latin America, and Europe. He was only getting the Africa stuff. And so of course he ended up getting it all. The traffic increased and he complained that his communications office needed more staff.

Q: It uses up a lot of time.

SILVA: it uses up time and resources. You have to have somebody in the communications room to deal with the traffic and much of it is not relevant to the post. But anyway, the trip was great.

Q: Well what was your impression of how the system operated? This was the first time you were able to get out and take a look. You mentioned the overstaffing...

SILVA: Overstaffing in some places, certainly. It was hard to say how much. The most important post there was Nairobi, where we had a political appointee. Next in importance was Antananarivo, in Madagascar, another political appointee. Then in Mauritius and in the Seychelles, there were a couple of career people. But I had a feeling that these were career people who were at the end of the line and were being rewarded with a kind of golden handshake in the form of a title. I don't know that it was a fair introduction to this sort of thing, because each was a special case that doesn't obtain in other parts of the

world. But it was a fascinating experience. There were a lot of things going on. That's one of the things I learned in this trip and on subsequent trips, is how much is going on under the aegis of the Government of the United States and performed out of Embassies. And those Embassies provide administrative support for those activities and have to be staffed to do so. The result is more people. The Foreign Service is rapidly becoming a support staff for other, essentially domestic agencies whose foreign affairs interests are often peripheral to their primary purposes.

I was asked by USIS to take a look at Zanzibar at the renascent library in Zanzibar. There had been a consular post and a USIS operation there but everything had closed down except for the USIS library and they were trying to fix it up. So, I went out to Zanzibar and found that USIS had a building and what passed for a library in reconstruction but didn't seem sure what it was there to accomplish. It seemed to me that the money could be better spent elsewhere. Then I discovered that the U.S. was running an anti-malaria investigation on the island. There were these American scientists out there doing whatever scientists do about malaria. I don't think it was fortuitous that they were there. They had been there for some time, some years, but at that time this new virulent form of chloroquin-resistant malaria from the Far East had reached that part of Africa. The Consul in Mombasa had died from it, and it turned out that a couple of the children of a missionary in Zanzibar had died from it. So here were these guys doing research on Malaria at the time when this invasion took place. No one in the Department had told us that the scientific team was on the island. You keep discovering these things in the inspection business. There are Americans in all corners of the world doing all kinds of things.

Q: Well even at the height of our terrible relations with Egypt, we had a Navy medical research station there. What was your impression of Nairobi? I have the impression of Nairobi being a nice place, all the agencies of the American government tend to congregate there. I remember interviewing an ambassador there who had been to Senegal

too who was saying that the FAA wanted to put a permanent person there and he said, hell, they don't need anybody.

SILVA: That was what we found. It was a very pleasant place to live. The climate is what you get in the tropics at 4,000 feet. Very pleasant. A nice city, good restaurants and hotels and all of that. The people were beginning to get a little surly. This is long after the “Mau Mau” rebellion, and yet you had a sense that people were surlier now than they were then, at least in the city. It was a classic example of the continuing problem of Africa generally. Villagers attracted to the city where there is nothing for them to do. The gap between the rich and the poor is a yawning chasm, and it becomes especially evident in cities. It is most visible in the city, with beautiful buildings on the one hand and tin shacks on the other. Mercedes in the streets and naked pot-bellied children in the alleys. But it was still a great place to live if you were a rich Kenyan or a Foreigner. Crime was on the rise, but not overwhelming. The Embassy was large. It had things like the regional office of AID's lawyers, auditors. The regional office in Nairobi to handle what? They were handling programs like Thailand. Every time they went to work they would have to commute 3,000 miles. I found the same thing in Honduras, where there were 40 or so members of AID doing regional work out of an Embassy where in order to get to the rest of Latin America you had to go to Miami. If they had established themselves in any other country they could have shuttled around Latin America, but from Honduras you had to go to Miami before you go south. It would have made most sense to base them in the regional center in Miami. But then there would be no government housing or other perks. AID is notorious for that sort of thing. When I pointed it out in the reports on both places, Nairobi and Tegucigalpa, it was rejected because as I was told AID had a specific mandate from the Congress to establish the services in those two places. It was grossly inefficient and expensive, and led to abuses in fiddling with exchange rates and importing automobiles for sale.

There are several places like that, where other agencies gravitate. They want to establish their presence in Rome, London, Paris, Ottawa, Hong Kong, Nairobi. That's where they want to be and that's where their employees like to play at being diplomats.

Q: When you were in what we now term the "old" inspection service, what was the role of the inspectors? What were they accomplishing, would you say.

SILVA: The notion then was that the inspector was out there not to trap anybody, not to find the malefactor, but to give advice and assistance to posts. Each team would have a political-economic specialist, an administrative specialist, a consular specialist. And theoretically a team leader who had some management experience for pulling it all together. At many posts you find that people are doing things in a manner that I would not say was illegal or contrary to regulations, but inefficient, or likely to cause difficulties, even to establishing conditions under which temptation could lead them astray. The team tried to help them out. That was the notion of the service at that time. That was our function, to offer advice and counsel. And of course if you found somebody misbehaving, you were supposed to straighten that out as well. There were instances of real misbehavior but I think they were rare and we would alert the department to begin an investigation or send out auditors. But that was not the main purpose of an inspection. There were some distinct differences back then in that the Inspector General reported to the Secretary of State, no one else. He was independent, but still within the hierarchy of the Department and his relationship with the Congress was pretty distant. That is the Congress, or the committees of Congress could obtain inspection reports, but they had to ask for them. They could also be classified and to some degree withheld. Now, they go to Congress automatically, they are delivered to the Congress and there is a very direct relationship between the inspection corps and congressional committees in general. And there is a little more of the "gotcha!" mentality. Sort of "We're out to catch you out there." I think there's still the pretense that "we are here to help." In the real world the balance has shifted along with the staffing of the IG. The office of inspections is now greatly outnumbered by the office

of audits and the office of investigations. Too, the change becomes inevitable with these self-serving reports that go directly to the Congress. What impresses the Hill is how many people were caught and punished and how much money was saved. I always found the so-called “savings” a little unreal.With its large contingents of auditors and investigators, the atmosphere in the IG is one of cops handing out tickets to meet quotas. The present arrangement with the congress (read Senator Helms) influencing the process so directly probably violates the constitutional separation of powers. But again the power of the purse is stronger than principle.

Q: If you don't find enough people doing wrong then you're not doing your job...

SILVA: Something like that. Although I do think there still is an effort to avoid that. Once a team is at the post it has to try to work with the staff if it is to succeed in learning what is going on. Still you can't entirely avoid the “us and them” attitude that comes out of the present system.

Q: You came back with this, from the African trip, and then where did you go?

SILVA: I think it was Canada. I did eastern Canada and Julius Walker did western Canada, I think mostly because he wanted to take that cross-continental train trip. That was still available then. Every post is different, but Canada was very different from most places. The Canadian problem—that is our problem in Canada, the basic, underlying problem, was communications. They were too damn good! You had every agency in the government established in Canada. In the Embassy mostly, but also in some outlying places. The Immigration & Naturalization Service, Customs, were there in Canada doing pre-clearances and that sort of thing at the airports. The FAA, the FBI, the IRS, the DEA and on and on. The work was being done by people who could pick up the telephone and call the boss directly in Washington. It was sort of a local call! Nobody paid a hell of a lot of attention. As a result the Embassy, in the persona of the Ambassador shall we say, didn't really know a lot of what the US was doing in Canada. They couldn't possibly

know what was going on with everyone in their Mission and other agencies in the country. It had certain advantages. You could get work done with Canada very easily. But no control over it, no central coordinated focus of our Mission to Canada. It was striking, and there were constant complaints. But then back here, I think we heard dissatisfaction from one or two people in the Department but nobody else seemed to be bothered by it. It seemed to be okay. It made you kind of wonder why we need an Ambassador in Canada. You've got all these little fiefdoms in Canada. The Ambassador was really dispensable. But that's the way it was. I don't know what's happened since then, but at that time we had a nice Embassy, across the street from the Parliament building in a long row of very stately sandstone buildings. Very convenient. You could walk across the street to the Parliament and the government buildings were all around. We had a very nice building but of course it was inadequate in size. The neophyte might suggest a cut in staff, but nobody ever does that! So a plan was afoot to enlarge the building, and they were going to do it sensibly. There were really two separate buildings with a parking space in between. They were going to build in the parking space and connect the two wings. That was pretty far advanced, I thought. And then the government of Canada decided they wanted that building, because it would be more convenient for the prime minister to work in that building than where he was currently ensconced. They were going to offer us alternatives, elsewhere, including land outside the province, which would have been interesting. There were a lot of offers being made, but when we left, nothing had been decided and I think we felt very strongly that they should not move. Don't accept the damn offers. We were in a perfectly good position, we owned the building, and dammit the prime minister could walk the extra 50 feet or whatever he would have gained. I think they just wanted us out of there. And at the same time they wanted us out of there, they were building the fabulous building of theirs on Pennsylvania Avenue. It was incredible. We let them get away with that and at the same time we let them do what they would to us in Ottawa.

Q: I always think the Canadian-U.S. relationship is an interesting one, because the Canadians always seem to cry, to take advantage of the fact that "Oh you're so big and I'm so small," and then almost do a number on us.

SILVA: They do numbers on us all the time! It's a very interesting relationship. All I know is the east and I don't know it all that well, mind you, but you have a place like Nova Scotia where I had a couple of local people say openly "Well, hell, we might as well be part of the States. All my family lives in Maine, people from the family are up here all the time, we're down there all the time. The border is wide open. We might as well be part of the States. We'd be better off than to continue in this mess with Quebec trying to destroy the confederation, etc." I got no feelings of "You damned Americans, it's like living next door to the elephant." But in Ontario it's very different. They are very independent of the U.S. there, very independent. And Quebec, of course, even more so. Of course there you find the many Canadians who make a living out of keeping the Americans at arms length.

Q: Well, then moving on, you...

SILVA: I think I went to China next. We did the Chinese posts. Again we split up. Julius and I both did Beijing and then he went off to do Shanghai and Shenyang, and I was given Chengdu and Guangzhou, old Canton, and Hong Kong. Again, I think I got the better end of that. Chengdu was great.

Q: Was Chengdu the old Chungking?

SILVA: No, it's the capital of Sichuan province. Chengdu is on the way to Tibet, not very far from Tibet, and very different from the rest of China. Of course roughly halfway between Beijing and Chengdu is Xian, the place where they found the terra cotta warriors entombed. More than 3,000 had been uncovered, now they think there may be 12,000 or more still to be dug up. We were able to spend a weekend in Xian, and then continue on. Very easy to do in China because the airlines are very sui generis. At any rate we were

able to stop in Xian at no additional cost. You can't get direct flights anywhere. They stop everywhere, like milk runs. But anyway, it was a great trip. I think it was by far my favorite inspection.

Q: What was your impression about what we were doing there?

SILVA: Well, it was early. We're talking now about maybe '86, '87? I guess it was '87. We've come a long way since then. Then the real problem in every post in China was housing — housing for the staff and housing for the Mission. In Beijing we owned the building in a diplomatic enclave. Not an old one, a new diplomatic enclave. Our next door neighbor was Bulgaria. It seemed to me to be an adequate building, but the Embassy always complained about it being too small. But all embassies complain about inadequate buildings. A lot of the staff were living in hotels. Some of the staff were living in hotel rooms that had been altered, by us, at our expense, into suites, so that if you had a family you might get four rooms, and one of the rooms would be converted into a living/dining room, you had a couple of bedrooms, and then one bathroom would be converted to a kitchen by covering the tub with a piece of plywood and installing a little stove. It was pretty awful, actually. But at any rate they seemed to be working out things that way, and they were doing the same thing in Canton. In Chengdu, everybody lived in the hotel and the Consulate was in the hotel. It had three or four rooms for offices in the hotel lobby. We stayed there too. It was very convenient, you could walk down the hall to work. It was a fascinating place. The food of course was fantastic, Sichuan cooking. Then the university was separated from the hotel by a public park. The park served as part of the campus of the university. So during the lunch hour we would walk around the park and every time we did we were accosted by students from the University who would ask “Can you help me translate this, sir?” In pretty good English. It was amazing. And they'd bring these volumes, one kid came with the essays of Emmanuel Kant in English, very complicated stuff, and he asked, “This sentence here, what does this mean? The words are words that I know, but what does that mean?” Well, I'm not sure what Kant means most of the time anyway, but I tried to help. It was embarrassing in some ways because they were very bright kids, they

knew English remarkably well and were intensely devoted to learning, learning, learning. Great place.

I think a lot has happened to our mission to China since then. Last I heard in Canton they've already gone ahead and built a little compound with office space and living spaces, but at the time it was really hell. The Consulate was at the top floor of an office building and you'd have to go through half a dozen security systems to get there. Most of them theirs, not ours. All local employees at all the posts were hired by the government and assigned to the Mission. We had one local employee in Chengdu, a very bright young man who spoke excellent English, much too bright to be hired as a local employee by the American Embassy. He should have been working for an international banking system somewhere. He was very helpful in every way. While I was there I mentioned that it would be interesting to see an original Chinese opera as it was done in Sichuan Province, with its own customs, etc. And he said, “Oh, that's too bad because the season has just ended and there won't be any opera now for four or five months. I said, “Oh, that's too bad.” And he offered, “I'll see what I can do.” This is a local employee, a little guy who filed things. That same day he came back and said: “The opera is arranged.” Of course he was a member of the local government hierarchy, and pretty high up. He actually arranged to bring the opera company back together, do some rehearsing, and then put on a performance for the inspection team! And I said, “What about the rest of the seats in the theater?” And he said “That's alright. It's just for you.” So I said that didn't seem to be very good. So they opened it up to anyone from the Consulate who wanted to come, and then they opened it up to the general public, so it filled up the theater. But then while the opera proceeded, we had an interpreter explaining not only what the movements were, but what the music, the colors, the masks, meant. A special interpreter sitting right next to us telling us everything that was going on. A seemingly insignificant consulate employee arranged it all. It was really something.

Q: Let's walk through and see what you remember about other inspections.

SILVA: I've done about 95 posts.

Q: Well let me ask you to point out some of the ones that might be more interesting. Any posts where there were particular problems, showing difficulties of the Service, challenges, or...

SILVA: There were so many... I inspected the Embassy in Chad, Fort Lamy, now N'djamena, some 25 years after I opened the post. I found AID in the building I had first leased for an Embassy, with an option to buy— much to the dismay of FBI, the foreign buildings people, they hate lease-purchases because I think it offends them in some way, placing an encumbrance on the government, making us promise to pay something in the future that we may not want to pay. Ridiculous. When I leased housing in the first place, 1960 or whatever it was, when I leased housing in the Chad there was almost no housing available, and the only way you could rent it was on a lease-purchase. The few French contractors there were not interested in long-term rentals. They wanted their money. So you could get a lease-purchase for four years at enormous rentals. At the end of that period you pay a dollar and took possession. Well, at the end of four years when I was gone from there and the leases were up I was called in by FBO and roundly criticized for these lease-purchases because now, four years had passed, and we would be required to pay the token sum and would own the buildings. The money however little would have to come out of the acquisitions budget which was already committed. So apparently they kept paying exorbitant rents for three or four more years rather than come up with the purchase money. I told them I would have been happy to pay off the lease and rent the buildings to them afterwards. They did not find that amusing. But then they're a humorless bunch. But at any rate the building that I had leased first (and was subsequently bought) for the Embassy proper, I thought was more than adequate for any Embassy we would ever have in a country as insignificant to our interests as the Chad is, I found had been turned over to AID. AID in the Chad had twelve offices in the building, crammed with people, an enormous staff. AID had this huge thing going on for a program

that was about as insignificant as one can imagine in a little country like that. But that was the way it went. The Embassy had a newly constructed building, a nice residence and staff housing all over the place, swimming pools, etc. And I was reluctant to tell my wife Mary what it was like. Because her memories did not include swimming pools and R & R every year and commissaries, and all those little things that have become indispensable to the new generation of FSOs. Still people complained all the time. It's not good enough, the Department needs to do more. Why doesn't the government provide baby-sitters? They should have day-care centers in every Embassy so that the wives can do whatever the wives want to do. It was unfortunate. But that is an attitude that prevails these days in the Service and it seems to be getting worse.

I did the South Seas, Papua-New Guinea, the Solomons, Fiji, New Zealand. We did all those funny little islands and New Zealand while the other half of the team led by Bob Barber did Australia. Again, I thought I lucked out and had by far the better part. Far more interesting.

I went to New Guinea. Some wonder, what we are doing in some of these places. They've got a vote in the UN. We've got a lot of missionaries up in the mountains. They're no longer being had for dinner, as they were not too many years ago, but they're up there doing their thing. I suppose we have a sort of minimal interest there that would justify an Embassy. But clearly the Embassy is bigger than our interest in the country. But then I think most embassies are too big.

In Fiji we had a sort of military assistance program at practically no cost. We had a couple of young soldiers, non-coms, who were assigned to a Fiji unit and supposedly were instructing them in some of the arcana of modern military work. That seemed to be okay. But again we had an embassy that seemed to be too big. We had a naval officer attached to the Embassy. He was there for a very good reason. He was not called a naval attach# until after we left. He was a representative of the Fleet ...

Q: Must have been the Seventh Fleet...

SILVA: Yeah, Seventh Fleet out of Hawaii, and his job was the typical naval attach#'s job. That is, he scheduled and arranged visits to the various islands over an enormous area. He deal with a great number of countries. That is sort of the traditional job of the attach#. But nonetheless this guy, because he was simply the personal representative of the admiral, had no status. He did not have diplomatic status, he was not accredited to the local government. So he could have been picked up on a traffic violation any day of the week and thrown into jail and disappeared! So we thought he ought to be an attach#. He was doing the work, so give him the title and protection that goes with it. And eventually they did. Apparently in Port Moresby back in New Guinea they heard about this and decided they had to have an attach# too. The Department gave them an attach# at some point, which I thought was absolute madness. The guy in Fiji was doing what needed doing in Port Moresby as well as Vanuatu and Western Samoa, the Gilberts and the Marshalls, and a vast area of ocean, very efficiently at low coast. We didn't need to proliferate naval attach#s simply to massage Ambassadorial egos. Certainly none of those countries are naval powers.

The Solomon Islands were absolutely fascinating because the US mission there came as close to what an Embassy in one of these little, less-important-to-us countries ought to be. We had one guy, and he had, I guess, two employees. He had a Australian woman who settled there. She did everything. She was his secretary and administrative assistant. She did the consular work, which he signed, when there was any. Otherwise she did it all, including the preliminary interviewing. She was a very, very competent woman. The Embassy was two rooms in a hotel. He lived for a long time in the next room over. Then he leased a house on a hill overlooking the town, but the Embassy remained in its two hotel rooms. I think he had a driver-messenger in addition. But that was the Embassy. He was charg#; the Ambassador was the Ambassador resident in Fiji. It worked out perfectly well. He had a radio and the secure telephone system. And he was supposed to deal through

Sydney to the world electronically. He didn't need any more staff. I don't know what the hell has happened out there since. They have either enlarged the place or they've closed it. Because there has been this mania for closing posts lately. It was an excellent example of how we can operate in some of these places at minimum cost. While we were there he found a building to move the Embassy to. It was a bank building sandwiched between a government office on one side and a police station on the other. Better security would be hard to find. The building was absolutely perfect. It scared the hell out of the Department and FBO because they saw it as the beginning of a growth phase. But all it was was a country bank built out of cement blocks. It had a huge vault in the back, one office, and a big open area in front, which was where his Australian friend would work. It was perfect. A year later when I checked into it, he still hadn't moved in. I don't know whether FBO had ever approved the purchase of the building. It was very cheap, it was available, it was perfect. The guy who was the charg# there was sort of made for the job. He loved it. He saw himself as a kind of Somerset Maugham character. He reveled in the role. He went around in shorts. His legs were ulcerated from some infection or other, and covered with these terrible running sores. He was undeterred. He was dealing with this with some sort of native remedy or something. It didn't bother him. He thought what the hell, that's the price you pay for having this kind of independence. He didn't want to ever leave. He would have stayed there forever if we would have let him. But I wondered, where do you find another guy like that in a Service like ours. But that was the islands.

Q: Did you get into the Soviet area, the bloc area at all?

SILVA: No. We did the Embassy in New Zealand, a beautiful, modern building, well done, suffering from the surfeit of security that afflict many posts. The Ambassador, a first-rate guy, Paul Cleveland, doing a great job, was very upset because members of the New Zealand government were frisked on the way in to visit him. They couldn't park their cars inside the walls in the parking lot, which was intended for that purpose. Under the new rules they couldn't do that. And then they went through metal detectors, all that sort of thing. It was as though New Zealand were Moscow, or worse. That was a major problem,

I thought. But I don't know how you fine-tune things like security, because nobody is willing to take the risk of reducing security. There was an interesting and unusual issue in New Zealand. The Embassy was no problem. We had a rather good sized consulate in Auckland, the North Island capital town. Their problem was the perennial problem of space. It was in an office building and it was not obviously designed for our purposes. So the consular work was hampered considerably, it was a terrible, terrible operation. But they were dealing with it and it worked. The interesting place was Christ Church. We had had a Consulate in Christ Church years before. In one of these economy moves, we closed it. So what we had left in Christ Church was a consular agent, a local businessman who was given the commission to represent us in some ways. And we had USIS library. USIS was there for a couple of reasons, not the least of which was the fact that the U.S. Antarctic expeditions all go out of Christ Church, and the U.S. Navy had a substantial installation there. Even at the time of year we were there, which was not the ideal time for exploration in Antarctica, and there was nothing going on, they had this rather large installation and a complicated bureaucracy with other countries involved. It seemed to me that we ought to be represented there more formally than we were. Because this was another case of an American, the USIS guy, not accredited to the government. He was not assigned to the Embassy and couldn't be residing in Christ Church. So he didn't have a title or diplomatic or consular status down there in Christ Church. Again, he could have ended up in jail on a traffic ticket. At the same time he was supposed to be there partly, at any rate, as a referee in the fighting between the U.S. Navy and this U.S. Committee, the Antarctic Group. They were always at loggerheads and he was supposed to be there to calm things down. On the other hand the consular agent was a very efficient guy, did a good job for us, we were paying him a few thousand dollars a year, but we were also paying for his secretary. It seemed to me that if we could do away with his job and give the secretary to the USIS guy. She was doing the traditional work of a consulate anyway, the recording of requests, transmittals to the Embassy. We could save the honorary consul's salary and commission the man from USIS a Consul, which would have thrilled him to death, and give him the status he needed to deal with the local authorities and the Antarctic people. When we got

back to the Department you would think that I had recommended the destruction of the Statue of Liberty. USIS was up the wall. They didn't want their man down there doing State Department work. I reminded them that I had just seen what their man was doing down there. He had a library run by locals and he didn't do much of anything anyway and he would have loved it. As a Consul he could increase the number of contacts he had in town. It would have been much to his benefit and to the benefit of USIS if they had let him do this job. The Department didn't like it, mostly CA, the Consular bureau didn't like it because they didn't want to give this guy a commission as a consular officer on the pretext that he had not had consular training. All that stuff. So in the end, nothing happened. If anything I think by now USIS has closed the office. But we're paying something, certainly then and probably now too, paying for more than we needed to by having this consular agent. Effective as he may have been it was more money than we needed to pay. And we didn't have anyone there with any clout to deal with these Antarctica people, who were, some of them, rather flaky.

Q: Were you around when the new inspection service started?

SILVA: Oh yeah. That was rather quick, I think it was the second or third year I was there. It came about through the agency, from what I understood, mostly through the agency of Senator Helms.

Q: Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina.

SILVA: He seemed to think, and there were a lot of people who agreed with him, that the Foreign Service was not really capable of policing itself. That sending Foreign Service officers out to inspect Foreign Service officers would lead to nothing except cover-ups. My experience is just the opposite. But Helms succeeded. He wanted to make the Inspector General truly independent of the Department of State. That means he really wanted that the IG report to the Congress and that inspectors not be Foreign Service Officers. Presumably most of the inspection teams would be made up of civil servants, and not

Foreign Service people. The most evident thing that has happened is the enormous growth of this thing. There must be 300 people there now. Before it was 50-60 people, now it must be 300 or more. A large auditing operation, a large investigation operation, the inspection business, the follow-up business. When I first started the scheduling and design of the inspection year, the division of labor and all that, was done by one person in between other jobs, for the same number of teams as we now have, mind you. Now there is a full fledged bureaucracy working on that. A lot of layering has happened and I think to some degree inflation of rank has taken place. And the cost of operation of the Inspection system is now at least ten times what it was before. It keeps people happy, I suppose. It works well enough in its bumbling bureaucratic way. It just seems to me that it's much bigger than it needs to be and is not really accomplishing much more than the old system did.

Q: Do you find a difference in what you were looking for?

SILVA: From the very beginning the new Inspector General would discuss at meetings we had that we were out there as management counselors, not as policemen. And a lot of the inspectors felt that way and operated that way. I think a lot of them still do. But it's hard to do that when you've got a bureaucracy as large as it is and two-thirds of it is involved in bringing people to heel, you know, checking up on whether they are cheating the government on the number of days of leave they have taken or the use of automobiles. We've got into some issues, what seems to me a ridiculous part of the time, such as — does the ambassador's wife have the right to use the official car. I don't know that that's been settled, but it keeps coming up. What about the ambassador? Does he really have the right to use that car as though it were a personal automobile for non-official purposes? The question comes up. I don't think it should. We're wasting our time chasing after these little things. But nonetheless that's the kind of thing we get into and I think we are forced into that by the overwhelming weight of the enforcement side of the office. When I first joined them, sometimes the team would have an auditor along with them to help out. In most cases that was a reward for somebody who would have ordinarily sat at a desk back

at the Department — give them a chance to go to some exotic place. But sometimes it was useful to have an auditor along. But now there's a whole separate organization.

Q: Are there any other posts that we should touch on?

SILVA: I did India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. I did Central America during the end of the Iran-Contra business, and then I did India. In both cases what I found disturbing was a strong sense of “clientitis.” We always talk about the clientitis bug-a-boo in the Foreign Service. It seems one of the great crimes if, my goodness, you should all of a sudden take the side of the country you are in. I agree that there are limits. But in Central America you got a sense that you had to join sides. You could not simply be a reporter and report impartially on what was going on because there was the great Iran-Contra issue hanging over your head. Are you on this side or that side? Are you going to support the government in its activities in Central America or are you going to support the critics of the government? People in the embassies had the sense of being forced into making choices. It was beyond the normal clientitis...some of it was simply CYA, cover-your-ass, because if you had an ambassador who was feeling a particular way, whether you felt that way or not you had to play the game to protect your performance evaluations.

In India there was the same sort of sense of who do you represent here? It was different, of course, but there was a sense of do you represent the government of the United States to India, or do you represent the Indian government to the United States? I felt then and I still do that a lot of that arises from the tendency of a lot of people in our business to specialize geographically. You become identified with a country or a little group of countries, and then you identify yourself with them. The Arabists. If you spent most of your career in Arab countries you will more likely be pro-Arab and anti-Israeli; and if you spend most of your time in Israel you're going to be anti-Arab. It tends to work that way. People who spend most of their lives in French Africa or British Africa, or what used to be French and British, tend to acquire the coloration of those countries. I think it's true particularly among the hard language officers, the China group, the Japanese group, the

Arabists, and the subcontinent people, the Indian people especially. In that Embassy there were people who had been there three and four times and also had served in one of the consulates and then served on the India desk in the Department. They are so involved that you wonder who they are really representing. You could see it in their reporting. They were reporting a view that was not really impartial. The Indians were almost always right about everything. And Embassy positions on some issues were not always in the interest of the United States.

Q: It's been one of the traditions you know that reporting out of Pakistan and Indian represents almost the Pak-Indian conflict itself. It's a major problem because it tends to cloud the issue because people tend to accept this prejudice back in Washington and therefore maybe miss some of the points they should not be missing.

Well, Walt, I don't want to cut this off. You've done so many places.

SILVA: I've done a lot of places. For example I've done some inspection trips, two or three now, with the new Office of Security Oversight. Again, it's quite different from the old Foreign Service inspections. They are designed specifically to look at the security problems in an embassy. I did Tunisia and Mauritania with them, and I did Israel, Jordan with them. It's interesting because you see some of the extremes to which the Department has gone in establishing security procedures, security requirements that are not really workable and are extremely expensive. They are much more than can be managed.

Q: Again, is this for the State Department a cover-your-ass kind of thing? It doesn't matter what happens just so long as we don't a building blown up on our watch.

SILVA: I guess. One of the more striking examples was the Embassy in Amman. It is no longer out of town, but it was built out of town on a bare-ass hill, part of the desert. Now there's construction going on all around it. But the Embassy looks like a modern version of an old desert fortress, with a great wall around it with towers, buildings in the middle, all kinds of security. Incredible security. A beautiful Embassy building, but every window

is bullet-proof glass an inch thick. Every window. Including windows that are on the inside looking into the courtyard. An expensive proposition. Why did anybody go to that much trouble? There are all sorts of things like that, and yet a lot that doesn't work. A lot of weaknesses that are obvious. For example, you could get into the American Club in the Amman Embassy compound through a back gate. And once you're in the American Club, you're in the compound! The Ambassador's residence is in the compound itself, and had a separate gate to get into his residence that was only 50 feet from the main gate. So you have to have two gates, two sets of guards, etc, and all you had was an extra 50 feet to go. It's dumb. That kind of problem is common there, even though enormous amounts of money were spent to create this fortress in the desert.

Then in Conakry the Department was upset with the inadequacy of security of the Chancery. The building in Conakry had originally been an automobile showroom, just a great big shell of a building, and they had bought this building, leased it or whatever, and put in floors, taken the building next door, and created a large office building. But it's right on the street. It's in the middle of town right on the street, where else is it going to be? But according the Bureau of Diplomatic Security we have to have that 100 foot setback. Every building should be set back 100 feet from the street for safety from bomb blasts. Even when it's not practical. You know what it's like in Rome. Rome is always criticized because there's not 100-foot setback, there's only 50.

Q: Well, they could rip down the Coliseum or something like that.

SILVA: I think now people are beginning to realize that some of these things are not feasible, not practical. There's a limit to what you can do. But vast amounts of money have already been spent, and I'm not sure that we're any more secure than we were before, or that we need to be.

Most recently I was on a team that inspected Haiti, the Dominican Republic and the Bahamas, from the ridiculous to the sublime you might say. Perhaps the less said about that the better.

Q: Well, why don't we stop here, Walt. And thank you very much.

End of interview